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MISS MOORE

BY

GEORGIANA · M · CRAIK ·

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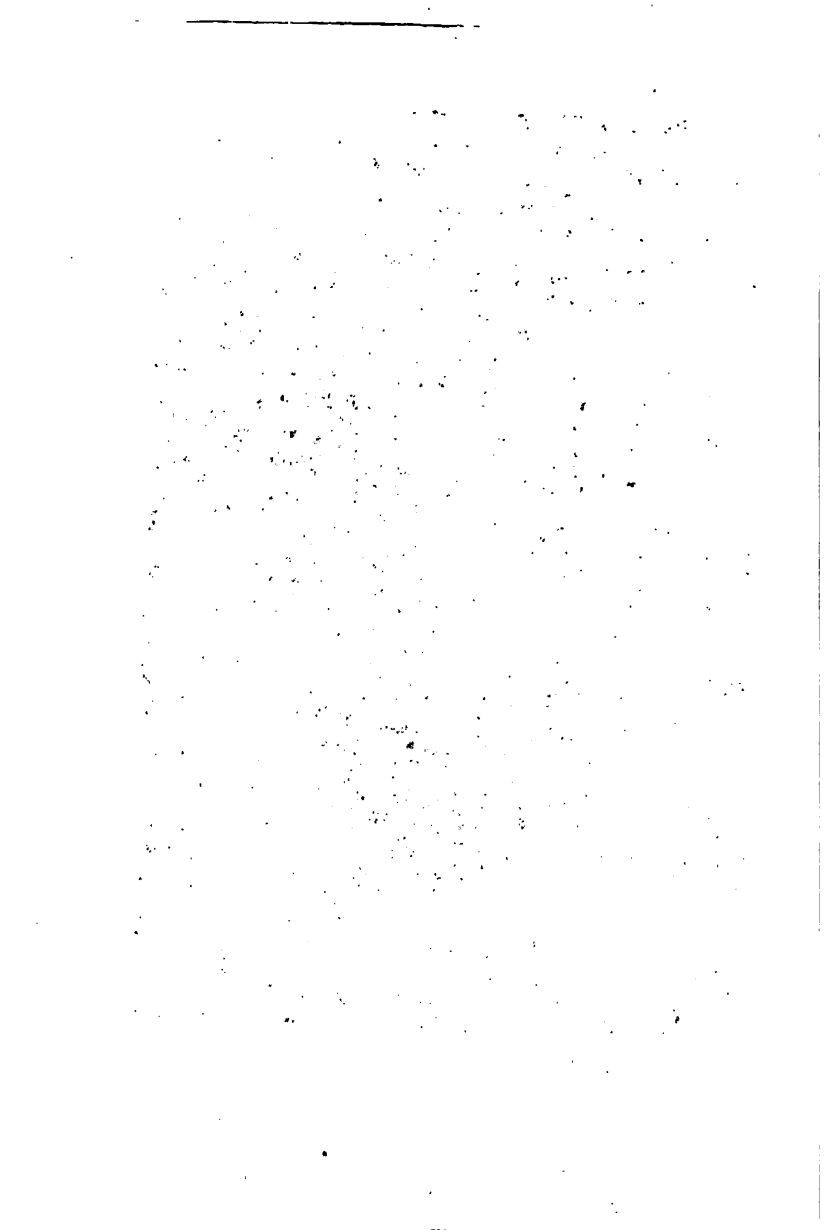

MISS MOORE

A Tale for Girls

BY

GEORGIANA M. CRAIK

AUTHOR OF 'THE COUSIN FROM INDIA' ETC.

ILLUSTRATED by ALLAN W. MAY

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MISS MOORE

CHAPTER I.

KATE, who was one of the twins, had just rushed up to the school-room, and told the others the news that she had heard, and the three children were boiling over with excitement and indignation. It had come upon them so abruptly that even Kate, who had heard it first, had not half recovered from the shock of it, and Maud and Marjory had scarcely yet begun to find their tongues. For, you see, it was such an important piece of news, and so sudden and so unpleasant. When Kate had burst in five minutes ago, and made that startling announcement, 'There's a new governess coming!' the others had felt almost as if a bombshell had broken in the room.

Startling as it was, however, there was no doubt about the truth of it. Kate had been in the drawing-room,

and had heard her grandmamma tell Miss Fox. Miss Fox was making an afternoon call, and the two ladies were sitting and drinking tea together, when they began to talk about the children and the children's teaching.

'So you are going to change your governess, I hear?' Miss Fox said.

At this Kate, who had heard nothing about the matter, and who was sitting in a far part of the room, you may be sure pricked up her ears.

'Yes, Miss Young is going away,' said Mrs. Blandford, placidly.

'Miss Young going away!' cried Kate from the distance, in a tone of horror; and Mrs. Blandford gave a little jump upon her chair.

'Child, I didn't know that you were there. You should never sit where people can't see you. It is anything but a nice thing to do, Kate,' said the old lady, severely.

'I didn't go there to listen; but if Miss Young is going, why haven't we been told?' cried Kate, risen to her feet, and hot and flushed with a sense of injury.

'You were going to be told in proper time. Sit down again, Kate, and compose yourself,' said her grandmamma, stiffly.

'I suppose Kate is fond of Miss Young, and doesn't like the thought of parting from her,' Miss Fox suggested kindly; but nobody took any notice of this little attempt to throw oil upon the waters, and the next moment Mrs. Blandford changed the conversation. As for Kate, she sat down again as she was ordered, and her eyes went back to the open book upon her knees, but I don't think she read another word of it during the remaining ten minutes that Miss Fox sat with her teacup in her hand. At the end of those ten minutes the visitor took her leave, and the door had hardly closed behind her when Kate was on her feet again, close to her grandmother's chair.

'Grandmamma, tell me about Miss Young! Why did you never tell us about Miss Young before?' cried the girl impetuously, with eager, indignant eyes fixed full on the old lady's face.

'Really, Kate,' said Mrs. Blandford, in a tone of annoyance, 'I think I must be allowed to choose my own time for telling anything to you. I had my plan in the matter: you may be sure of that.'

'But is she really going?' cried Kate.

'Yes, she is going,' said Mrs. Blandford.

'And is somebody else coming in place of her?'

'Certainly some one else is coming in place of her.

A lady is coming of whom I have reason to think very highly. That is all that I intend to tell you at present, Kate; so I think now,' said Mrs. Blandford, 'you had better go upstairs.'

And thereupon upstairs accordingly Kate went, and burst into the school-room with that announcement that took away her sisters' breath.

What was to be done in the matter? or rather (to begin at the beginning) could anything be done at all? They all said at first not only that it would be perfectly dreadful to have any other governess except Miss Young, but even that it would be quite impossible to have any other—for had not Miss Young been with them almost as long as they could remember, and how could they ever say their lessons to anyone but her, or bear to see anyone else in her place? But yet so many things come to pass that seem at first sight to be impossible, that, though they all began by saying that the thing could not be, yet by the end of half an hour they had talked themselves into such terribly low spirits about it that Miss Young, who came into the room then (she had been out during the afternoon), found them all with red eyes, and looking as if their hearts were breaking. 'Well, my pets?' she came in saying cheerfully; but the next moment

she saw their long faces, and then, before she could do much more than open her lips again, Marjory had jumped up from her seat, and thrown herself with a sob upon her neck.

'Oh, Miss Young!' cried Marjory.

'To think that you never told us!' exclaimed Kate.

And then Maud ejaculated something too; and almost before she knew what had happened Miss Young found herself plunged down upon a chair, with all the three children hanging on her.

'My dears, you mustn't go on like this. Oh, my dears, you mustn't!' cried Miss Young, rather helplessly, with the corners of her mouth beginning to quiver. She guessed, of course, what had been told to them, and she sat with them all about her, trying hard to smile a feeble little nervous smile, and laying a tender hand on the hair now of one, now of another, head close to her. 'I was sure you would be sorry; that was why your grandmamma thought it best not to tell you, you know. Oh, you mustn't cry, dears! We are none of us going to cry. Of course we are all very sorry, but I dare say—oh yes, I have no doubt it's all—all for the best,' said poor Miss Young, with a sudden jar and break in her voice; and then somehow the next moment she had got her head on

Marjory's shoulder, and Marjory felt two or three sobs come fast, one after another.

'Your grandmamma thinks that you should have somebody with you who is a little older and more accomplished, you know, than I am,' said Miss Young presently, when she had dried her eyes again; 'and I am sure she is right. Yes, dears, she is quite right, for you are getting such big girls now. Why, Maud, you and Kate will be eleven in three more months, and I never expected, when I came first, to be able to go on teaching you until you were as old as that. You see, darlings,' said the meek little woman, 'I am only a children's governess, and you two are getting beyond me. Yes, you are. You don't know it yet, but you would find it out presently if I were to stay, and I shouldn't like that. I did indeed think once, just for a little while, that I might take some good lessons, and make myself better able to teach you; but your grandmamma didn't think that that would do; and she has judged wisely, dears—I am sure of that. She has judged very wisely, and I am quite satisfied,' said Miss Young, and gave another rather quivering little smile.

But, though Miss Young said she was satisfied, still I am afraid the children were a long way from being

content. It is so hard ever to be content with what one does not like—hard enough at all times, but hardest of all when one is young, and we have to lose the things we care for without understanding the reason why we lose them. These children loved their governess whom they had had with them for five years, ever since they were little creatures out of the nursery, ever since Marjory, who was only eight now, could remember anything. How good she had always been to them! how patient! how happy they had all been together! Why should she not go on teaching them? they thought. It seemed to the children that if they ever acquired all the information that Miss Young possessed, the most exacting person could not ask more in the way of education from them; for did she not know all Dr. Goldsmith's histories and Clyde's and Thomson's geographies almost off by heart, while, as for accomplishments, could she not play and sing, and read French almost without a dictionary? 'Ah, but, my dears, there are so many more things than these that you will have to learn,' Miss Young herself said, shaking her head humbly over the thought of her own deficiencies. But Kate and Maud could not see the matter in that light. They did not want to know more; they only wanted to be taught

by Miss Young, and to know what Miss Young knew.

She was a pretty, gentle, fair-haired woman, with quiet, shy ways. She was quite young yet—not more than three or four-and-twenty, but she had got to have rather a wistful, worn look in her face that made her seem older than she was. Some people get to look as if they were always anxious about some secret thing, and that was what had happened to Miss Young. She was always anxious about her work, and afraid that she was not doing it well. She loved these three children, and wanted nothing so much as to stay with them, but she had left off being happy when she was with them, because for the last year or two she had been gradually coming to feel that Kate and Maud were getting too old for her. They were such big girls now, and Kate was clever, and she often asked questions that Miss Young could not answer, or at least that she could not answer till, often late at night when everybody was in bed, she could go downstairs to the large bookcase in the dining-room, and ferret out facts and dates and whatever else Kate wanted from encyclopædias and histories and dictionaries there. She used to blush when Kate asked her these things that she could not answer, and the blood

would tingle in her cheeks when, instead of being able to send the child away satisfied, she could only say to her—'My dear, I'll find out presently, and let you know.' She understood quite well that Kate ought to have a governess who *could* tell her all these things at once, without needing to go away and look for them in books, and her sense of this had been making her very uneasy for a good while past.

And then, too, she could not keep the children in order when they were troublesome. It was all very easy when they were *not* troublesome: they all worked very nicely together then; but if Kate was cantankerous, as she was sometimes, and Maud, as also occasionally happened, was sulky, and Marjory too full of fun, Miss Young knew quite well that she might talk, and order, and entreat, but that no more came of all she said than if she was addressing herself to the winds. It was quite true that they were very fond of her, but they never minded her unless they liked; and she knew this quite well herself, and, what was worse, Mrs. Blandford knew it too.

'Really, Miss Young, it is surprising to me that you have not a better method of managing these children,' Mrs. Blandford would often say to her in her stiff way: and sometimes, after a rebuke of this

sort (which she always submitted to in meek silence, because she knew so well that she deserved it), the poor little governess would go away to her own room, and sit there and cry her eyes half out with pain, and with shame for her own shortcomings—for she was such a gentle, timid woman that she could neither bear to give nor receive a sharp word.

She lived, too, very much in awe of Mrs. Blandford at most times; but that indeed was not much wonder, for Mrs. Blandford inspired a great many people with awe. She was a very upright and good woman, but she did not make people very fond of her upon the whole. She had never made her grandchildren fond of her. These three little girls had lost their own father and mother a good while ago. Their mother had died very soon after Marjory was born, and then their grandmamma had come to live with them and their father, and after a year or two had passed so their father had died too. Marjory had been just three years old then, and she hardly recollected him. All of her lifetime that she did clearly remember she had spent with her grandmamma alone; and yet, though she had known her grandmamma so long, she had never got fond of her. Some children's grandmothers, you know, are very tender to them,

but Mrs. Blandford was never tender. She did not think it was a right thing to indulge children, or to caress them much, or to make companions of them, and she did not care especially to have her grandchildren love her, but was quite contented if they respected and obeyed her. And in this matter she thoroughly obtained what she wished, for there is no doubt that Kate and Maud and Marjory gave very little love to her, but they did respect and obey her most entirely.

So it was little wonder that she could not understand how Miss Young failed to manage them when they were troublesome, and when the poor little governess saw the ease and success with which their grandmother reigned over them—for a word or almost a look from her was enough to bring them to their senses, let them be as bad as they might—even to herself it did often seem an amazing thing that all her efforts failed to enable her to do likewise.

'I am afraid I *must* be very bad at training children,' she would say sometimes so meekly that it was quite touching to hear her. 'I am sure I try, and I am very fond of them, and they generally like me: but yet, I know quite well that they always get their own way. I suppose I am not firm enough

with them; that must be it; and yet I do so try to be firm,' the poor thing would say.

She had had some talks with Mrs. Blandford about the matter, and I am sorry to say they had seldom been comforting talks. Mrs. Blandford never meant to be unkind, but she usually used to say things that made the little governess cry. One day, a couple of months ago, Miss Young, with a very sad heart, had told Mrs. Blandford that she thought she had better go away. It was not only that she had no authority over the children, but it was this other trouble too—that she did not know enough to be able to go on teaching them—that lay heavy on her, and made her feel that she should not stay.

'I can't bear to think of leaving them, but yet I am afraid I ought; and I think you would be better satisfied to have some older person with them,' she said to Mrs. Blandford, with a faint—a very faint—hope perhaps that Mrs. Blandford would contradict her, and say that she was content that things should go on as they were: but unhappily Mrs. Blandford did not contradict her in the very least. She merely coughed a dry little cough, and never said a word one way or the other, till Miss Young, though she had hardly any heart to do it, screwed up her courage and spoke again.

'There was only one thing I had thought of,—whether, perhaps, if in the holidays' (there were Midsummer holidays near at hand) 'I could take some lessons, and work hard for a few weeks—whether that might make me able to go on for a little longer,' said Miss Young, faintly.

And then she looked wistfully up: but Mrs. Blandford as she looked up gave a portentous shake of her head.

'I should not like to encourage you to think that anything would come of that,' the old lady said, very shortly indeed.

'Oh, well, I suppose not: I was afraid that it wouldn't do,' answered Miss Young. 'Then I *had* better go at Midsummer, don't you think?' And as she said this—for she had lived so long in the house that it seemed more like home to her than any other place—her heart went down as if it had been a lump of lead.

'On the whole, taking everything into account, I think you had,' Mrs. Blandford replied.

And so the poor little governess's resignation had been accepted, and Mrs. Blandford had found another governess in her stead.

CHAPTER II.

OU haven't even told us her name yet; what *is* her name?' asked Kate.

It was five o'clock, and Miss Young, with rather red eyes, was pouring out the tea. She had been crying a little, and the children had been crying too; and then one of the maids had come in with the tea tray, and they had taken their places as usual round the table. For one must drink tea and eat bread and butter though the heavens fall.

And, indeed, the heavens had not quite fallen just now, though to the children it almost seemed as if some catastrophe not much short of that were about to come upon them, for they had passed suddenly into the shadow of a great change, and they were bewildered and distressed by the strangeness of it. That Miss Young should go, and that some one else whom they had never seen should come in her place—how could they realise this or reconcile themselves to it? Marjory

stole nearer to Miss Young's side than usual as they sat round the table, and slid a tiny hand presently into hers. Was she not Marjory's friend of all her lifetime? The child was a bright and merry little thing, but she had silent, wistful, tender ways with her at times. I think of them all Miss Young loved her the best: though she was troublesome at times, she had a way of stealing into your heart, Miss Young always used to say, more than either Kate or Maud.

'Her name is Miss Moore, my dear. She is—she is, I think, a very nice person,' said Miss Young, gulping down something in her throat. 'At least she is a very *superior* person, I am sure. I should think she was very clever, and she is very accomplished, I know. Your grandmamma thinks very highly of her.'

'Then I don't think it is likely that *we* shall,' said Kate, saucily.

'Oh Katie, you mustn't say that. You must try to like her.'

'I never like anybody by trying,' persisted Kate.

'And I hate superior people. I like people of your sort,' said Maud.

'Oh, my dears!' cried Miss Young, happy against her will, but with her conscience troubling her.

'And I suppose she is old?' said Kate despondently, after a few moments' silence.

'Well, not what anyone could call *old*; but I dare say she may be five-and-thirty.'

'Good gracious! said Maud.

'Why, then, she'll never let us have any fun!' exclaimed Kate. And while Miss Young laughed they both looked aghast.

'I don't think it matters much whether she's old or young, but it's so dreadful to think of her coming at all,' said Marjory, sadly. 'Oh, Miss Young, do you think we couldn't do anything—anything to keep you, I mean?' And Marjory looked up into Miss Young's face with her eyes full of tears.

There came something into Miss Young's throat again, and she did not answer for a moment or two; but then as soon as she could speak she said, almost with a laugh (for, though she was not very strong or very clever, she was a good, unselfish, right-minded woman),—she said quite cheerfully and simply, 'No, you foolish little goosie, of course you can't do anything. The only thing you can do is to be kind and nice to Miss Moore when she comes, and to get all the good from her that ever you can. That is the only thing for you to do, my pet.'

'I *shan't* be nice to her,' said Marjory firmly, with a flush coming into her face.

'Oh, Marjory!—my dear!' exclaimed Miss Young.

'None of us will be nice to her!' cried Maud, fired by the contagion of a bad example.

'My dears!' repeated Miss Young, imploringly.

'Why, how could we be? You don't expect us to be hypocrites, do you?' exclaimed Kate, with her eyes alight.

And then Miss Young folded her hands one over the other, and felt (as she had felt on many an occasion before) that the children were going to be too much for her.

'I shall hate her when she comes,' said Maud.

'I shall hate her before she comes. I hate her now,' cried Kate.

'I'll not learn any lessons for her,' said Marjory.

'Children! Children!' feebly ejaculated Miss Young.

'If we worry her perhaps she'll go,' exclaimed Kate.

'You can't worry some people—that's the worst of it,' said Maud, despondently.

'Oh my dears, hush!' said Miss Young.

And then she gathered herself together, and ner-

vously began to make a speech. She made a little speech full of right feeling, though it was rather feeble, and not very effective, I am afraid. She told the children that they were very foolish and wrong to talk as they were doing, and that it did not make her happy at all to hear them, but on the contrary very unhappy indeed, for that they ought to make up their minds—indeed they ought—to receive Miss Moore very kindly, in a right spirit, and not to do anything so silly as to think of showing their affection for herself by trying to prevent their new governess from doing her work well. 'For you know, dears, we are all trying to act for the best,' she said, plaintively; 'and I am going and Miss Moore is coming only because it is for your good; and if you try to thwart the plans that are made for you by people wiser than yourselves don't you think you will act very foolishly and wrongly, and do a great deal of harm, and no good at all to anyone?'

The children held their tongues while Miss Young made this address to them, but Kate's mouth, as she sat with it fast shut, kept an obstinate look about it, and Maud played with bread-crumbs on her plate, as if she were not listening, and Marjory's keen little face, though she coloured a little, scarcely changed its

expression one bit. I am afraid, though she spoke excellently, that Miss Young did not carry her audience with her; and indeed she felt this herself, as in similar circumstances she had often felt it before, and with a patient sigh, after a few moments' pause, she rose up from the table.

'You must think it over for yourselves, dears,' she said, a little sadly. 'Thinking is better than talking, so you must think, and try to bring yourselves right. We won't talk any more now. Get our book, Kate, and we'll have some reading. I should like us to finish this volume before—before the holidays come, you know,' said the gentle little woman, with a falter in her voice for a moment, just at the last words.

CHAPTER III.

WELL, they were full of faults, but they were not bad children on the whole. They were almost as good as gold during those last weeks that Miss Young stayed with them. They petted her, and made much of her, and learnt their lessons for her, and *almost* obeyed her.

'I never knew them so good before; they are no trouble at all,' she said wistfully and pathetically more than once to Mrs. Blandford. Perhaps she thought in her heart—'If they had always been as good as this I might have been allowed to stay,' and it might have seemed hard to her. But she was so gentle and humble that she made no complaint. She would have liked so much to stay, if she had but known a little more, and had had a little more force of character, so as to have made her staying profitable: but since it was not to be she submitted patiently.

'I don't think you will ever quite forget me, you know. If I thought that you would forget me I should mind it more,' she said one day to Marjory.

She was fondest of Marjory; she knew that quite well. When they were all out of doors, and the twins would go rambling away together, as they liked to do, Marjory would stay with her, and they would walk hand in hand, and have long talks about all kinds of things, and tell stories to each other. I don't think that Miss Young told stories very well; she had not much graphic nor dramatic talent in her, nor any great flow of words; but happily Marjory was too fond of her to find out that. Marjory was a little maiden who had a great thirst for information of all kinds, whether it came in the form of fact or fable, whether it was told to her tamely or vividly. Miss Young's tales were sometimes very tame indeed, yet Marjory liked them. She loved her gentle little governess, and never found her dull, though she herself was bright and full of life.

The month was May, and there was a little wood beyond the garden that was all carpeted with wild hyacinths. It was Marjory's delight to come here and lie looking at the flowers amongst the grass, and at the high sun-lighted trees above her head. She used

to think that there was nothing in all the world so lovely as this little wood in spring, with those harmonies of colour round her,—that blending of the purple with the grass down at her feet,—that tracery high above her head of the green young leaves against the sky.

Miss Young would often sit here and do her embroidery calmly and busily at some tree's foot, while Marjory, with her empty hands, sat by her, doing nothing but gazing and yearning and wondering.

'What an idle little thing you are! Look, I have brought your work for you,' the governess would sometimes coaxingly say, and would produce it from her hand-basket and give it to the child; but Marjory never received the gift with much gratitude, I fear, and rarely set a dozen stitches into it.

'I can't bear to work here where there is so much o look at,' she would always say. 'One can work indoors best where there's nothing to see.' And so she would let her sewing drop down on her knees, and Miss Young would give a little uneasy sigh, and wonder helplessly what, in similar circumstances, Miss Moore would do. For Marjory, you see, always got her own way with Miss Young, and Miss Young's conscience was sore because of it.

I don't know, for my own part, that about this particular matter it need have been sore; but then, you see, Miss Young thought it was a fitter thing for Marjory to work white flowers upon a muslin ground—which was an occupation that left visible and useful results behind it—than to lie and look up into tree-tops, which was evidently a manner of passing her time that was quite profitless and unproductive. One ought to work white flowers and examine the beauties of nature swiftly. It should not take long to look at a tree, or a hill, or a sunset, Miss Young always thought. Miss Young was quite persuaded that *she* looked at all these things thoroughly, and yet how small a portion of her time she wasted over them! How much more proper it would be if Marjory would do as she did! But yet, in spite even of her love for Miss Young, somehow Marjory never would.

She used to listen to her governess's stories as they sat in this little wood together. Sometimes she listened, and sometimes she told stories in her turn; and I think her stories, though they were very childish, had a good deal more life in them on the whole than Miss Young's. For she was a clever little thing, and Miss Young, you know, was not clever. Miss Young never made stories at all, for she was not inventive,

but she used to ransack books to find little tales and anecdotes of a nature to approve themselves to her pupil's mind, and then would make notes of them in her pocket-book, to which she could refer, lest they should prematurely slip out of her memory before she had repeated them to Marjory. She was a kind little soul, and took a great deal of trouble to do all this—far more trouble than Marjory had the least idea of—for the child always thought that there was an inexhaustible supply of stories in all grown-up people's minds,—as abundant as the little wood's supply of wild hyacinths. She never imagined the pains with which Miss Young used to rake her little tales together, and go searching for them here and there. She was a grown woman herself, I think, before she ever knew or even suspected it.

These last weeks were very sad ones, and yet in some ways they were such happy ones too. The children were all so sorry about Miss Young's going that they did not know how to make enough of her. They were always petting her, and doing little things to please her; and, I am obliged to confess, trying to show their regard for her by railing at Miss Moore. It was very foolish, of course, but you can't think how they all three worked themselves into a resolution to

dislike Miss Moore. Nothing that Miss Young could say had the least effect in making them reasonable about her. They all three said that they knew they couldn't like her, and they wouldn't like her, and they didn't want to like her. In their different ways (for they were very different in character) they made up their minds that they would not be good to her. She was coming when they did not want her—when they wanted somebody else instead of her—and so they meant to look upon her as an enemy. Besides, they liked nothing that they heard about her. She was old, and they liked governesses to be young: she was plain (of course! when she was thirty-five), and they liked people who were pretty: she was strict, and they loved to have their own way: she was a person whom their grandmamma thought highly of,—and I am afraid that one fact alone, if every thing else had been in her favour, would have gone far to make them set up their backs at her.

They were a stiff-necked little set of people, you see, and gentle Miss Young in vain preached to and wrung her hands over them. It almost made her quake in her shoes to think that all this bitter feeling should have come out of their love for *her*; but whether she quaked in her shoes or not the result was all the

same: they had made up their minds to dislike Miss Moore.

So the days passed on, till a day came at last when the children sat alone in the school-room with red marks about their eyes. The weeks over which they had lingered so lovingly had passed away then, and Miss Young had packed her trunks and gone away. It was a fine day,—a sweet summer day with the sun shining.

They had all been very sorry to part. Even Mrs. Blandford had said some kind words that had touched the little governess's heart. It was not a heart that you needed to pierce far to reach to. She had almost cried with gratitude when Mrs. Blandford kissed her, and told her to come and spend her next holidays with them.

She had got another situation to which she was going in a few weeks, where she was to teach two little girls. 'But I never shall care for any other child as I do for you, my darling,' she said to Marjory before she went away. She had no home, nor any relations of her own, and Marjory possibly was the dearest thing in all the world to her.

And Marjory too thought at that moment that she could never love anybody else as she loved Miss

Young. The others were sorry that Miss Young was going, but they were not sorry as Marjory was. When the last kiss had been given, and she could see her friend's face no more, the child's sorrow became for the time a sort of desolation, and while the two others only sat in the school-room, subdued and sad, Marjory put her face down upon her knees, and cried, and would not be comforted.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. BLANDFORD was not in the habit of taking the children into her confidence, and for a good while they had not an idea when Miss Moore was coming. Day after day they used privately to wonder and speculate about her arrival, but day after day passed and she did not arrive. It was holiday time, and summer weather, and they spent half or more than half their days out of doors, and were very idle, and on the whole pretty happy, though they thought they were not, for of course they looked upon themselves as three little victims, and considered their case to be one that deserved a very large amount of pity,—as indeed who could doubt that it was? for had they not lost a friend whom they were very fond of, and were they not about to be committed into the charge of a person who would try to rule them with a rod of iron—a spiteful, ugly, old woman, who would probably turn out to be just like one of the wicked fairies in the story-

books? I think Marjory at any rate believed with all her heart that Miss Moore would be just like a wicked fairy in a book, and was a great deal more seriously disturbed because of her than either Kate or Maud; which indeed was only natural, for Marjory was but eight years old, and eight is a very foolish age compared with eleven, which was the time of life to which the twins had reached. The twins were very angry about Miss Moore, but they did not take her quite so much to heart as Marjory did.

During the holidays they used to take their meals with their grandmamma, and these meals were very solemn times. Mrs. Blandford thought that at table children should not speak unless they were spoken to, and, as she had never much to say to her grandchildren, the consequence was that they used to sit in almost perfect silence; except that sometimes one would kick another surreptitiously beneath the table for a little diversion, and make her laugh, or Kate would make faces across the cloth to Maud or Marjory.

It was while they were all sitting one day at one of these solemn meals that the announcement they had looked for so long was at last made to them. They had just eaten their pudding, and were expecting their grandmamma to say grace, when, instead of saying

grace, she folded her hands upon the table-cloth, and cleared her throat, and made this little speech :—

'I think it is time to tell you, children,' she said, 'that I expect Miss Moore by the four o'clock train to-morrow afternoon. Your lessons with her will begin on Thursday. I have only further to say that I trust you will all of you,'—here Mrs. Blandford looked slowly round from one face to another,—'I trust you will all of you resolve heartily to do your utmost to profit by her instructions. In the case of you two—Kate and Maud—far too much time has already been wasted, and you will have to make up for many days that have been more or less misspent; but I hope you are aware of this, and that I shall not have to repeat what I am saying now.'

'*I* am not aware of it,' said Kate, suddenly and rebelliously, though not much more than half above her breath.

'I think we have learnt quite as much from Miss Young as most girls know,' said Maud.

And then there was a solemn silence, and I fancy that while it lasted all the children's hearts beat rather fast; for they held their grandmamma, you know, a good deal in awe, and were very little usually in the habit of answering her or expressing their own

opinions when she made little speeches to them. But they were, as you are aware, in a bad frame of mind about Miss Moore, and so the colour had come to their faces as Mrs. Blandford spoke, and they had burst out hotly with these two little sentences; and upon the whole I am not sure but what in the circumstances it was a wholesome thing to do, and I rather hope, for my own part, that they felt the better for it.

But, unhappily, Mrs. Blandford did not think it a wholesome thing to do at all, and she drew herself up till she looked as stiff as a grenadier, and then she turned her eyes (she had quick brown eyes, and very thick dark eyebrows over them) to Kate's face first, and then to Maud's, with such an expression of dignified astonishment that, though neither of the children were cowards, they began to quake a little, and to feel very much as if their courage were oozing out at the points of their fingers; and after two or three moments of dead silence—

'I think, Kate and Maud, that you had better retire to your own room,' she said in such an icy tone that if it hadn't been July you would have begun to shiver. 'I cannot prevent you from feeling like very foolish children, but I can, and I certainly will,

prevent you from being insolent to me. Go up at once to your room: and, Marjory, go to the schoolroom and practise.'

And then she rose from table, and the children rose too: and next moment they were rushing upstairs, with their foolish little hearts on fire.

'Do you think I care? I'm glad I said it! One may just as well sit in one's own room as anywhere else,' cried Kate, with scorn.

'It was a shame of her to speak like that of Miss Young! Much *she* knows what we have been doing with our time!' said angry Maud.

And then they flounced into their room; and next minute Marjory in the schoolroom began to play her scales.

You see they were not very good children,—poor little souls. They were silly and hot-tempered, and when they got angry they often said rough and ugly things. But how could it well have been otherwise? For so long a time they had lived with no one whom they really loved but Miss Young, and Miss Young never knew what to do with them when they were naughty, except to coax them. As far as her rule over them was concerned they had had such a royal time of getting their own way, and if now, when

they felt that a conspiracy was on foot for trying to prevent them from getting it any more, the poor little undisciplined things should resist and flap their wings and struggle to rebel, was it to be wondered at? I think Marjory's fingers went very irregularly over her scales this afternoon, and Kate's and Maud's cheeks, even a couple of hours later in the day, had more than their usual colour in them.

But yet the little storm died out after a time, as all storms, little or great, do. After all, though they were resolved to dislike Miss Moore, were they not curious about her too?

'I shall hate her, I know,' said Maud at night when they were going to bed.

'Hate her! I should think so!' echoed Kate, scornfully.

But, nevertheless, the last thought in their minds before they went to sleep, and the first that came to them when they woke, was the thought that in a few more hours they should see her.

And so in a few hours more they did see her. It was just half-past four o'clock in the afternoon when the chaise in which Mrs. Blandford had gone to the station to meet her drove up to the house-door. The children were all three in the schoolroom. 'We'll go out before

she comes,' Kate had said to her sisters in the morning, having, after deep meditation, come to the conclusion (in spite of her curiosity strongly impelling her the other way) that this step would, in the most satisfactory manner, show a proper spirit of rebellion; and the others had agreed, and—though they all in their hearts longed to stay in—they had quite made up their minds to go out into the wood after dinner, and to remain there till it was time for the tea-bell to ring.

It is so tiresome, however, that grown-up people will so often interfere with the plans that young people make! No sooner was all this comfortably settled than—just after dinner had begun—their grandmamma chose to say to them:

'Remember, children, I wish you to be in the house when Miss Moore comes. She will be here soon after four o'clock, and I wish you all three to be ready to see her.'

'But we were going to sit in the wood,' blurted out Kate upon this, pretty saucily.

'You can go and sit in the wood, if you like, till four o'clock,' replied Mrs. Blandford, 'but at four o'clock I desire you to come in; and when I bring Miss Moore

to the schoolroom let me find you ready to receive her, with your dress in order and your hair neat.'

So then Kate held her tongue, and the other children too went on eating their dinner in silence. Of course it was a great shame for their grandmamma to interfere with them, and they were very cross because they were not allowed to carry out their own plans; but yet, perhaps, at the bottom of her heart, each one of them felt something that was not quite either anger or regret. For though they would have gone out of her way to show their dislike of her, above all things did they not want at the first possible moment to see what Miss Moore was like?

They went, therefore, to the wood, and stayed their permitted time there; and at four o'clock, with some show of reluctance—which, however, after a little they forgot to keep up—they turned their steps homewards again, and before the chaise with Miss Moore in it drove up to the door, they were all in the schoolroom, with their hats off, and their hair smooth, and as neat as new pins.

'I am sure we are not going downstairs to see her, at any rate,' Kate had said, and they had all agreed that certainly they would not go downstairs. Since their grandmamma had ordered them to come in they

had been obliged to come in, of course, but as for humbling themselves any further—they all scorned the thought of it. Accordingly they took their places in the schoolroom, and Kate and Maud did their tatting, and Marjory nursed Zitta, who was a little black and tan terrier, her especial pet and playfellow; and so they waited, till the sounds of wheels upon the carriage-drive made their hearts go pit-a-pat.

'There they are!' cried Kate.

'Oh, I see her!' said Marjory with a little gasp, for Marjory was sitting in the window-seat.

'What's she like?' exclaimed both the girls in a breath, and in the excitement of the moment, forgetting their dignity, they jumped up; but at that instant the chaise turned an angle of the house and was lost to sight.

'I just had a single glimpse of her, you know, but —but I think she looked horrid,' said Marjory, with the colour hot in her cheeks.

'Looked horrid, did she?' asked Maud, rather taken aback, for she was hardly prepared for anything quite so bad as that.

'Well, you know, I didn't quite see her,' explained Marjory hesitatingly. 'I *think* she looked horrid—but they passed so fast.'

'Oh well, we shall see her soon enough now,' said Kate, contemptuously. 'I don't think we need trouble ourselves about her looks, one way or the other;' and then, rather ashamed of the eagerness she had shown, she sat down again, and went on with her work.

She worked for ten minutes more, and during these ten minutes, to tell the truth, the hearts of all the three children beat rather fast. They beat rather fast all through the ten minutes, and at the end of them they beat very fast indeed, for when they had passed they heard steps upon the stairs, and voices in the passage; and then a hand opened the schoolroom door, and the three pairs of eyes all looked up—and there was Miss Moore at last, standing by their grandmamma's side.

She stood in the doorway for a moment quite still and looked at the children, and the children looked at her. She was a slight, middle-aged woman, not pretty, with a little grey in her hair.

'Children, here is Miss Moore. Come and shake hands with her,' said Mrs. Blandford in her plain, stiff way. 'These are the twins, Miss Moore,—Kate and Maud. Kate is the eldest. And this is Marjory. Put down the dog, Marjory, and come here.'

'Do you think she will kiss us?' Maud had asked the others before she came, and with one voice Kate

and Marjory had declared indignantly that they wouldn't let themselves be kissed: but they might have spared themselves the trouble of proclaiming that determination, for Miss Moore made no attempt to kiss them whatever. She only came a few steps forward into the room, and with a very little smile held out her hand.

The children of course had risen up, for though they all wished to be as ungracious as possible to Miss Moore, still they did not dare to carry their ungraciousness so far as to remain seated when she appeared; and so one after the other they came up to her, and she shook hands with them. She shook hands without speaking to Kate and Maud, but when Marjory came with Zitta under her arm, she put her other hand on the dog's head and stroked it, and then, looking down into Marjory's face,

'Is this your little pet?' she asked her.

She spoke in a voice that was not soft or gentle, but so curiously clear that the sound of it made you think of the ringing of a little bell. All the children said as soon as she left the room again that they did not like it: but at any rate, whether they liked it or not, it was so different from any other voice they knew, that as

soon as she said those few words to Marjory, Marjory's eyes went up to her face.

She looked up at Miss Moore for a moment or two, and Miss Moore looked at her; and then she drew back a step and answered, not very graciously,

'Yes—I'm very fond of it.'

'You are very foolishly fond of it,' Mrs. Blandford interposed, coldly. 'I think you did not hear me tell you, Marjory, to put the dog down.'

At this Marjory deposited Zitta upon the floor, and retreated another foot or too. She rarely opposed her grandmamma, but the little face looked hot and angry as she dropped the dog upon the ground. Miss Moore might or might not have noticed it: no one could tell, for she stood looking on so quietly.

Mrs. Blandford began to talk to her in another moment about the size of the room, and its airiness, and the view from the windows; and then they moved to the window where Marjory had been sitting, and stood talking together there.

'She certainly didn't trouble herself to take much notice of *us*,' Kate said afterwards when she was gone, in a tone that one might have supposed to betoken annoyance (only that, of course, as she had not wanted Miss Moore to take any notice of her, it

could not have meant that). 'She treated us just as if we had been three tables or chairs.'

But Miss Moore had her face half turned from the window as Mrs. Blandford stood talking to her, and, for my own part, I am not so sure that she took as little notice of Kate and the others as Kate herself thought. She had keen grey eyes: she did not look exactly like a person who went about the world without seeing things.

'Miss Moore will spend this evening with me, children,' Mrs. Blandford said after a little while, 'and Emma will bring your tea to you here. Let me show you your room now, Miss Moore.'

And then she led the way, and without opening her lips to say another word Miss Moore followed her out into the passage again. She closed the schoolroom door as she went away, and then the children looked at one another, and Kate dropped down into a chair, and made that remark that I have written above.

Do you think they were disappointed because the interview had been so very short and unimpressive? They would not have allowed that they were, of course, and yet I almost think that it was so. Their expectations had been roused to a pretty high pitch

before Miss Moore came, and now in two or three minutes their meeting with her was over; and could a duller or more stupid meeting possibly have taken place? The whole thing had gone off so tamely and ineffectively that really I don't wonder they felt cross, and as if they had been somehow wronged. For excitements—even disagreeable excitements—don't come in our lives every day, and naturally when they do come we like to make as much of them as we can.

'I am sure *I* don't want her to take notice of us. The less notice she takes of us the better, I think,' said Maud contemptuously, and went back again to her tatting with an air of business, as if she was quite vexed that that important operation had been interrupted for five minutes by so unimportant an event as the coming of a new governess.

'If she never says more than she did now she won't give us much trouble,' said Kate.

'What an odd voice she has!' exclaimed Maud.

'I think she is odd altogether. And she is ugly too—just as I knew she would be. And did you see her hair? it's grey!'

And then these young things laughed derisively.

What could be more absurd than to think of having a governess with grey hair!

However, after a little while, though at first their vanity had been hurt because Miss Moore had seemed to pay so little attention to them, their spirits began to rise; for they had been a good deal in fear of Miss Moore before she came, and now a comfortable kind of feeling began to steal upon them that she was not so alarming after all. They had expected her to be a formidable, bustling, authoritative sort of woman, who would try to get the upper hand of them at once, and would prove too much for them perhaps; and very evidently she was not that at all. She was not that, and what if she should turn out to be quite the reverse of that? What if she should not get the upper hand of them, but that they, instead, should get the upper hand of her? As they talked the matter over, it really began to appear quite possible.

'Why, she didn't seem to have a word to say. She looked as if she was quite stupid,' exclaimed Maud.

'Oh well, I don't know about her looking stupid exactly,' said Kate; 'but if she goes on always being as quiet as this, I don't think we need mind her much.'

'And if she *doesn't* go on being so quiet?' said Marjory.

But the two elder girls went on talking together, and did not answer Marjory's question. So Marjory pondered it in her own mind, as she played with Zitta, who was growing sleepy, and was stretching herself out on Marjory's lap to be rubbed, in a state of supreme content.

The children had their tea together, and except for a moment they saw no more of Miss Moore that night. When their bedtime came, and they went downstairs, as they always did, to say good-night to their grandmamma, they found the two ladies sitting talking in the drawing room in the twilight. But Miss Moore, though she had seemed to be talking at their entrance, became silent as soon as they appeared, and merely said 'Good-night' to each of them as they came up in turn to her to shake hands. She seemed, certainly, a woman who did not care to take much notice of young people—which was a curious fact to the children, who naturally enough supposed that their species was one peculiarly interesting to governesses, Miss Young, who was a child-lover in a high degree, having deeply impressed them with this belief during many years. Indeed, as you

know, Miss Young had made herself a slave to these three little Blandfords, and had held herself from morning to night at their beck and bidding in a most sensible and delightful way; so that it was no wonder that the sight of Miss Moore's indifference now should not only strike them as very singular, but should even ruffle their tempers in quite a perceptible degree. For it seemed so odd to have a governess who showed no desire to have anything to do with them. 'Do you think she will condescend to propose to teach us to-morrow?' Kate said scornfully to Maud as they went to bed.

Well, I don't know that she exactly *proposed* to teach them to-morrow, but when the morrow came she certainly showed a most unmistakeable *intention* of teaching them. Their usual hour for beginning lessons was 9 o'clock, and at 9 o'clock Miss Moore was in the schoolroom, and for the first time she and the three children found themselves alone together, and face to face.

CHAPTER V.

IT was a sunny room, with flowers upon the window sills, and green leaves close outside. One birch-tree grew so near that the branches swept across the panes, and made gentle little tappings and rustlings there that Marjory loved to listen to. The children liked their schoolroom. They had spent many happy hours and days in it—they three and Miss Young. But now Miss Young was gone, and some one whom they did not know, nor want to know, was come in her place; some one who was not kind and pretty, as Miss Young had been, but ugly and grave and cold. At least they had said when they saw her first that she was ugly; perhaps they were not quite so sure about it now, but at any rate they did not *want* to think her anything else. She was ugly and cross, and in all likelihood just like their grandmother, they said.

So when the door was closed upon them all together I don't think the children's faces looked sweet. They had not very clearly made up their minds as to how they meant to conduct themselves, nor in what way it would best become them to show their intention of being troublesome and of resisting Miss Moore's authority, but of the desirability of being troublesome they were all most thoroughly and comfortably convinced. They had, indeed, quite resolved long ago that they would be bad to Miss Moore; but yet, as they took the places to which she called them at the schoolroom table, to tell the truth, they were not quite clear in their minds as to the way in which their resolution was to be carried out.

She was a slight, middle-aged woman, with a small pale face. She had dark brown waving hair that was beginning to lose its brightness and be touched with grey, and dark eyes that seemed to change their colour as the light fell in one way or another on them. She took her place at one end of the schoolroom table, and called to Kate and Maud to sit on her left hand.

'We sit one on each side,' Kate coolly said in answer to this order, and made a motion towards the right.

'I prefer to have you both together,' replied Miss Moore, quietly. 'Sit there, my dear.' And she pointed with her finger to the place by Maud's side.

So then Kate sat down. She did not quite know why she did it, but somehow at the moment she did not feel quite certain how to resist. It is such an annoying thing not to be always perfectly ready with all one's wits about one! Of course this was a small matter, for Kate had no particular feeling about the place in which she sat; but as she took the seat by Maud's side she bit her lips, and felt that she had begun the day's campaign badly. A first wrong step, even though it is only a tiny one, always tries one's temper so!

Kate was cross with herself as she sat down, so she planted her hands before her on the table and looked sulky.

'Are these the whole of your lesson books?' said Miss Moore to Maud, pointing to a little pile that stood upon the table before her.

'Yes,' answered Maud shortly.

And then Miss Moore began to look at them.

'Have you never learnt out of any histories except Goldsmith's?' she asked after a few moments.

'No,' said Maud.

'We've learnt from Mrs. Sinnett's,' Kate struck in, bluntly.

'Oh! this little book of Universal History? Yes, you seem to have learnt from it, for it is pretty well worn out. You have learnt a good deal, too, out of Thomson's Geography apparently?'

'Yes, we have gone through it a good many times.'

Maud made this answer complacently, in a tone as if it must silence all criticism.

'Then it might possibly be an advantage to begin now to go through something else?'

'Miss Young didn't think we should. She said we couldn't do better than go on with Thomson,' Kate said rebelliously.

'Was that what Miss Young said when she left you?'

Miss Moore glanced up at Kate for a moment, and though her mouth looked quite grave, there was something like a gleam of laughter in her eyes.

'When she—left us?' echoed Kate awkwardly, a little taken aback.

'Yes; I mean, when she went away did she tell you that she hoped you would never study any geography but Dr. Thomson's?'

Maud gave a sudden little half-strangled laugh

(which of course she ought not to have done), and the colour came into Kate's face. Then Miss Moore's mouth, which had been quite grave hitherto, broke also into a smile, and—

'She didn't tell you that, did she? I thought not,' she said. 'Well then, without any want of respect either for Miss Young or Dr. Thomson, I think we may presently, if we please, begin to learn out of a new book. You would'nt want to go on practising one tune, or doing one piece of work for ever, would you, Kate? Dr. Thomson's is an excellent geography, but do you think there can be nothing in all geography to be learned but what is contained within the covers of this book?'

Miss Moore made this little speech very rapidly, in her curiously bright clear voice. She looked at Kate, too, as she spoke, and Kate's eyes dropped before hers, for Miss Moore's eyes had very evident amusement in them, and naturally Kate did not like to be laughed at. So she sat still at the table, hot and cross.

For the next ten minutes she never opened her lips, and whatever questions Miss Moore asked were answered by Maud. Maud said 'Yes' and 'No,' and looked on while various lessons for the next day were being marked. After this was done Miss Moore

piled up the books again and put them aside, and there was a little pause ; and then—'I should like to hear you read now,' she said. 'What is the book that you are reading? This?' And she took a well-thumbed volume from Maud's hands, and opened it—not, I am afraid, with quite as much appearance of appreciation as she might have shown—at the title-page. 'Oh, D'Aubigné's Reformation; I see,' she said, shortly.

'We have nearly finished it,' explained Maud. 'Miss Young thought we might have quite finished it before she went, but we couldn't.'

'Let us begin bravely, then, and perhaps we may get it done to-day,' said Miss Moore.

Maud glanced up, and there was that gleam of laughter in her eyes again. There was something in the laughter that was contagious too, for Maud also at sight of it felt a desire to laugh, and only restrained herself with an effort, and because she did not know what Miss Moore was laughing at. For was she laughing at Miss Young or at Monsieur D'Aubigné? If it was only at Monsieur D'Aubigné, Maud would not have minded joining her in her amusement at all, for Maud had yawned over Monsieur D'Aubigné a good deal during the last six months; but if she was

laughing at Miss Young—! Maud set her lips close together, and would not look at the bright dark eyes again. When, after a few moments, Miss Moore handed her the open book, she began to read quite in a sulky tone.

'"About this time, towards the end of the year that had been so disastrous,"' mumbled Maud.

'My dear, will you begin that sentence over again? I have not heard a word you have said,' interposed Miss Moore. 'Better sit up a little more. Don't drop your head so much over the book. Now then.'

'"About this time, towards the end of the year,"' began Maud afresh, quite as sulkily as before, but a good deal louder.

'I am sorry to interrupt you again, Maud,' said Miss Moore, 'but is Kate deaf? *I* am not.'

Maud gave a grunt; and a sudden guffaw, hurriedly suppressed, came from Kate; and then there was a sudden pause.

'Now begin once more,' said Miss Moore.

But Maud had dropped the book upon the table.

'I don't know how you want me to begin,' she said, with the colour in her face.

'Give the book to me then, and I'll show you.'

So Maud, silent and sulky, yielded up the volume, and Miss Moore took it and began to read.

'"About this time, towards the end of the year that had been so disastrous,"' read Miss Moore, in her clear musical voice.

They did not like her, yet they could not but feel that she read in a way that seemed to put something they had never had in them before into the words she read. Kate's eyes went up to her face, and she sat with them there for two or three minutes listening: Marjory listened from her seat at the other side of the room.

Miss Moore read a page or two, and then stopped.

'No reading is worth anything if it is not distinct, but you may make it distinct without making it loud,' she said. 'Now go on from here, and give your mind to what you are doing.'

And then once more Maud got the volume into her hand, and lifted up her voice.

She read atrociously: to tell the truth, both she and Kate read about as ill as a pair of girls could. They had not bad voices, but their reading was slovenly, unintelligent, inexpressive, indistinct. They gabbled, and mumbled, and raced on, regardless alike of sense or of punctuation. You couldn't follow them

without so great an effort that, for their own parts, they never thought of following one another, any more than one of them would have done if the other had been holding forth in an unknown tongue. That the exercise was in some mysterious way salutary for them they seemed to take for granted; but that they could derive enjoyment from it, or afford enjoyment by it to any other creature, was a remote idea that, as she listened to them, it seemed to Miss Moore could never once have entered their minds.

With an odd look upon her keen face, Miss Moore sat listening. At first she tried to correct Maud's numerous blunders, in word and sense and intonation; but presently she stopped correcting, and on Maud went triumphant, as if she was trampling over a ploughed field, while Kate, calmly indifferent the while, did her tatting, and Marjory sewed muslin flowers in the background. Kate and Marjory were quite accustomed to Maud's reading, and accepted it philosophically, as we accept the other inevitable ills of life.

It came to be Kate's own turn presently, and the book was passed on to her, and she too did her performance bravely.

'Is that the end of a paragraph, my dear?' Miss

Moore asked after some time, when she had paused exhausted for a moment, to take breath.

'No, it's the middle of a sentence,' answered Kate, in an injured tone.

'Then why do you break off in the middle of a sentence?' inquired Miss Moore.

'I've only stopped for a moment,' said Kate, defiantly; naturally enough thinking that in her style of reading it made no sort of difference where she stopped.

'We usually consider that pauses of that sort are only made after full stops, my dear. You don't stop in the middle of a sentence when you are talking, do you?'

But, instead of answering this question, Kate merely hitched one shoulder up, and then rather rudely went on reading. She gabbled over another page, and then she drew up abruptly.

'That's the end of a paragraph,' she said, shortly.

'You may put your mark in, then.'

So Kate rapidly inserted the mark, and shut the volume with a clap.

'I should like to have been able to gather a little more of the sense of what you have been reading,' Miss Moore quietly remarked when this was done.

'Have *you* been quite able to follow your sister, Maud?'

'To—to follow her?' echoed Maud, looking up with a startled face.

'You are more familiar with her voice, of course, than I am. Do you find it quite easy, I mean, to understand her when she reads?'

This was so unexpected, not to say so unjustifiable, a question to ask, that Maud flushed up as hot as fire, and glanced uneasily at Kate before she attempted to reply to it.

'I—I don't know,' was all she found herself able to say awkwardly, after a moment or two's silence.

'You don't know, my dear? How can you help knowing?'

And then, as Miss Moore fixed her eyes on Maud, Maud wriggled and looked uncomfortable, and finally mumbled in an offended way—

'I can understand her very well when I listen.'

'And don't you listen usually?' said Miss Moore.

Was it not too bad? Did she mean to put them through a cross-examination like this every day, and poke into their weak places, and make them condemn themselves out of their own mouths? Maud had become hot and angry, but what was the use of being

hot and angry when Miss Moore had got the better of her, and asked her a question that she could only answer by confessing—what she didn't want to confess? She sat without speaking, with her eyes upon the table, and then Miss Moore, merciless as fate, put her question afresh.

'Do you *not* listen usually, my dear?'

There was a little pause, and then Maud saw no way of escape, and spoke.

'I do sometimes,' she said shortly.

'Have you been doing it to-day?'

'N—o.'

'Not at all?'

No answer.

'Did *you* listen to Maud, Kate?'

'No!' said Kate, sharply and defiantly.

'Did you listen to yourself? Can you tell me what you have been reading about?'

The colour rose into Kate's face too, but there came no reply.

'Give me the book. I should like to ask you one or two questions.'

Miss Moore held out her hand, but Kate did not put the volume into it: instead of giving up the volume she raised her eyes with a flash in them to Miss Moore's face.

'Miss Young never questioned us on what we read,' she said.

'I did not inquire what Miss Young did, Kate. Give me the book.'

The quiet determined voice had not changed one bit; the hand that had been held out was still extended, calmly and patiently; and—and somehow, without knowing in the least clearly why she did it—Kate obeyed Miss Moore's order (slowly and angrily indeed, but yet she did it), and delivered up the book.

She was very angry, however—naturally—at having been made to do what she had not meant to do, and the little face looked threatening as a thunder-cloud as Miss Moore took the volume and opened it.

'You needn't ask me anything,' she broke out roughly, before Miss Moore had said a word.

Miss Moore looked up quietly into the flushed face.

'Why need I ask you nothing? Is it because you know that if I put any question to you you couldn't answer it?' she said.

And then after a moment, when there came no reply to this, for Kate was ashamed and dogged, and would not speak,—

'Don't you think, then, if that is the case, that there

must be something wrong in your way of reading?' she asked.

'I hate that book!' said Kate, passionately.

'And therefore, because you hate it, you think you are justified in reading it as if you were a parrot?'

'I don't read it like a parrot. Parrots couldn't read it at all.'

'Oh Kate!' said Maud, half above her breath.

For Maud was much less quick-tempered than her sister, and said insolent things much less often than she did. Kate's tongue indeed had a very frequent habit of being insolent, and she knew this herself, and on the whole had found it hitherto, when in these humours, a very powerful and serviceable weapon, for by means of it in the course of her life she had routed a good many people. She had routed Miss Young with it on numerous occasions, and had plumed herself a good deal on her victories. What if by help of it she could also now rout Miss Moore!

I am afraid, however, as she sat with her angry eyes upon Miss Moore's face, that she was not sanguine of routing her. Miss Young had been meek and timid as a dove: Miss Moore unhappily seemed to be so very little like a dove in any of her attributes. The pale, keen, calm face appeared no more ruffled

at this moment by Kate's violence and rebellion than it might have been by the buzzing of a fly in the air, or the beating of a bee against the window-pane. She began to answer Kate quite quietly.

'No, parrots cannot read, but parrots learn words from other people's lips, and say them aloud without attaching any meaning to them; and you, when you read, are apparently content too to do that. Now, for my part, my dear, I am not; therefore I think I shall have to try and teach you to read differently. In the meantime, however, since you confess that you know nothing of what you have been reading about, we may as well put the book away, and not waste time over it. It is, I think, rather an ignominious confession to have made. Will you get your slates now? I am going to give you a dictation.'

So Kate and Maud got their slates, and wrote their dictation, I am afraid—though perhaps they would hardly have acknowledged it—in rather a crest-fallen state.

When this was over they were dismissed for a time, and Marjory was called to the place by Miss Moore's side—foolish little loyal Marjory, who had been sitting in her distant seat for a hour and a half, hardening her heart more and more against the woman who had

come into Miss Young's place. The child was a loving little thing, and it had seemed to her all this morning, more keenly than it had ever seemed to her yet, that it would be so dreadful that she did not know how she should bear it to have anybody else to teach her except Miss Young—her own Miss Young who had been so fond of her, who used to hold her with her arm about her neck as she stood beside her, who used to play with her hair and pet her as they talked! These weeks since Miss Young had gone had been holiday weeks, and in holiday time it had not been so sad and strange to be without her; but now it seemed to the child as if she had never missed her enough—had never loved her enough, or mourned for her enough; and as she rose up from her seat in the window, and came to the seat to which she was called by Miss Moore's side, her hot little heart was all aglow with love for the friend that she had lost, and with petulant unreasonable childlike wrath against the innocent person who had come to usurp that departed friend's authority, and to teach in her place.

The dictation had been corrected, and Maud and Kate had risen from their seats.

'Now, my dear, bring your books and come here,'

Miss Moore said, looking round to Marjory; and Marjory got up and came forward slowly, books in hand. She was a nice little pale fair-haired thing, with a pretty earnest face. Her books began to slip from her hold as she crossed the room with them, and she caught them in her pinafore rather dexterously, and carried them the rest of the way so. 'That was neatly done,' Miss Moore said to her when she reached the table, and looked at her with a smile; but the child did not smile back in return. She only relieved herself gravely from her burden, and then took her place with an unchanged expression, like a little piece of stone.

'Now then, show me what you have been doing,' Miss Moore said, and Marjory opened her books, and in dumb show proceeded to indicate with her finger the several last lessons that she had learnt. She was an orderly little thing, and she went gravely from book to book, pointing out the pencil marks in each. Those marks had all been made by Miss Young, and the little finger touched them sadly and tenderly. They were rather feeble marks, made with a pale pencil (Miss Young's pencils, somehow, had been always pale): they were not very conspicuous on the pages. Miss Moore's firm black stroke, as she set it

presently to the lesson to be learnt next, made an odd contrast to them—and an ugly contrast, Marjory thought: but then Marjory was prejudiced. She liked that little pale ineffective dash: how many a time had she not seen Miss Young's delicate silver pencil make it! The little lines scattered about the page seemed to her still like a lingering bit of her friend.

In a few moments Miss Moore began to ask questions of Marjory. What were the various things that she had done? Had she done—this and that? The child was proud—for Miss Young at any rate, if not for herself—and tried hard to answer these enquiries so that her answers should throw no discredit on her friend. She tried to do this, and perhaps, too, she succeeded in doing it, for Miss Young had taught her carefully, and on the whole not ill. Then Miss Moore opened her atlas, and put her through an examination in geography that brought the colour to the little face; for alas, she was asked a good many questions that she could not answer, and a good deal of information was given her that had never been given her before, and that I am afraid she resented on that account—for, if it had been worth giving, would not Miss Young have given it to her long ago? Miss

Moore told some stories to her about people and things in various countries that she would have been interested in if she would have allowed herself to be interested—only she would not. She would not let herself be interested in anything that Miss Moore might say. She sat obstinately with her eyes down, twisting her fingers together, and Miss Moore could not tell if she was even so much as listening to her. Only once did she forget her indifference for a moment, and look eagerly up. Miss Moore was telling her something about an Esquimaux dog—a rough old dog that she had heard of once, who had saved two children from dying in the snow. As she described the creature's brave devotion, and told her of the strange sagacity with which he had lain down beside the two lost little ones, so that the warmth of his body might help to keep the life in theirs, Marjory looked up, with her heart risen to her eyes.

'And did he save them? Did somebody come?' she asked, eagerly.

It was a bright little face, sweet, honest, and simple. I think Miss Moore liked it, for a half smile came to her lips as, looking into the upraised eyes, she went on with her story. But after a few moments, when the crisis of the tale was past, Marjory recollected

suddenly that she was doing what she had not meant to do, and the head dropped again ; and though Miss Moore went on talking, she obstinately would not look up any more.

The sun was shining out of doors, but I think the spirits of all the four occupants of the schoolroom were rather weary when the clock struck twelve at last, and it was time to leave off work. Miss Moore, perhaps, for one, was wearier than the others thought. We care so little and think so little of the feelings of older people when we are children. To these three little Blandfords their new governess was only an intruder who had come where she was not wanted; a stranger whom they did not like ; an enemy whom it was their business to resist. They never remembered once that, being a stranger in the midst of unknown faces, she might be tired and lonely, and that some kind word or act of theirs might have had the power to cheer her. They never asked themselves what home she might have come from, what friends she might have left, what interests she might have amongst people of whom they knew nothing. Here she was amongst them, alone ; and they never thought once—never for one moment while they were trying to make her work hard to her—that her heart might be

aching for something she had left behind. The age of childhood is a very beautiful age, no doubt; but the age in which we think a little more of other people than we do of ourselves,—on the whole is that not rather a lovelier and a higher one?

They went out in the afternoon and had a long walk amongst the lanes and fields, but, the children being in the mood in which they were, you can imagine that nobody enjoyed it very much. Miss Moore tried to talk to Kate and Maud, but the twins were sulky and silent, and then she tried to talk to Marjory, but Marjory would hardly open her lips. So after a good while she sat down on a felled tree in a field and took a book out of her pocket, and left the children to themselves. This answered pretty well, and for a while the twins rambled about, as they liked to do, arm in arm, and Marjory filled her lap with wild flowers; and then they went home again, and the young ones had, at any rate, the satisfaction of feeling that they had kept Miss Moore well at bay, and in any intention that she might have had of making herself at home with them had defeated her handsomely. If they had not much enjoyed their walk, this was at least, you see, a result to congratulate themselves upon.

Only, unhappily, there was one little thing that marred their satisfaction in it; they had begun, even already, to have a painful suspicion that Miss Moore was not a kind of woman who would be quick to acknowledge defeat. You might oppose her and be troublesome to her, and seem to get your own way with her for the moment, but in their hearts when they went to bed that night both Kate and Maud had a dim uneasy fear that, unless they were as watchful as young lynxes, she might turn the tables upon them at some time when they were not prepared for her, and unfairly get the better of them; for she was so cool, and so quick, and quiet.

'I think she 's a horribly cunning old thing!' Kate said as they were undressing. 'The way she looks at you alone is enough to make you wild.'

'I don't so much mind the way she looks at me,' answered Maud; 'but I hate how she comes down upon you suddenly and makes you say things when you don't want to say them.'

'That 's just part of her cunning,' said Kate in a tone of scorn.

'Yes, I suppose it is,' answered Maud, dubiously, as if that explanation did not comfort her much; 'but it 's very unpleasant, I know.'

'It's horrid!' said Kate, feelingly. 'I know if she goes on often as she did this morning, I shall hate her.'

'As she did about the reading, you mean?'

'Yes, about that—and everything; treating us just as if we were fools!'

'It seemed to happen so unfortunately,' said Maud looking uneasy. 'Of course if it had been a nice book, or a story, we could have told all about it; but who could ever suppose that she would begin to ask questions about that horrid old D'Aubigné?'

'She just did it to put us out,' said Kate.

'Yes, and unfortunately she *did* put us out; that 's the worst of it.'

'I don't know that.' Kate made this reply rather quickly. 'I told her that I wouldn't answer her questions, and I didn't; so I got my own way more than she did hers.'

'But you would have answered them if you could, you know, Katie,' said Maud in rather a grave voice.

'I don't know that I should.'

'O yes, you would! You would have been too glad to do it. At least I know I should. Why, if you

could have answered you would have got the best of it at once; she couldn't have said another word.'

'I don't think she was able to say much more, even as it was.'

But Kate after she had made this reply changed the conversation. It might be perfectly true that she had not come off triumphantly in the passage of arms that she had had with Miss Moore, but she was a stiff-necked little soul, and even to Maud she did not love to acknowledge defeat.

CHAPTER VI.

'THAT lesson is not learnt, my dear.'

It was the middle of the next morning, and Kate was stumbling deplorably over the delivery of some task that she had to repeat when Miss Moore laid down the book with these decided words.

'I couldn't learn it any better,' responded Kate, roughly.

'That is a mistake, Kate. You could undoubtedly learn it a great deal better. Take it back again and learn it over again,' answered Miss Moore.

And then the book was handed back to Kate by Maud—Kate sulkily refusing to touch it—and set open on the table before her face: and for half-an-hour nothing more was said.

At the end of that time—dismissing Maud, who had been having a reading lesson such as Maud had never before had in her life—Miss Moore addressed Kate again.

'Are you ready with that lesson now, my dear?'

Without replying, Kate sulkily handed back the book, and Miss Moore, taking it, began her re-examination.

'What is the length of the Mississippi, and by what towns does it pass?'

'It is nearly three thousand miles in length,' mumbled Kate, 'and it passes by—'

'You had better look upon the map,' said Miss Moore.

'It passes by St. Louis,' Kate went on, hardly condescending to glance at the open atlas; 'and—and Eddyville—'

'It doesn't pass by Eddyville.'

'(Some other does then.) And Natchez, and—New York.'

'New York?'

'Well—New Orleans. It's all the same,' said Kate, insolently.

'Kate!' said Miss Moore, suddenly, but in a very quiet voice.

She said the word not even quite aloud, and yet all the three children as she said it felt their hearts give a great beat. Maud and Marjory stopped what they

were doing at the sound of it, and the colour came into Kate's face.

'Have you relearnt this lesson, Kate?'

'No,' said Kate, half defiantly.

'Did you not understand that I meant you to relearn it?'

And then Kate made no answer. There was entire silence for a few moments, and at the end of them Miss Moore closed the book.

'I will speak to you presently,' she merely said to Kate, very quietly. 'Get your slates now for arithmetic.'

And two minutes afterwards the arithmetic lesson had commenced.

The rest of the morning passed uneventfully. Kate and Maud did their sums: Marjory said her lessons. At twelve o'clock they stopped work.

'On with your hats now, and out of doors with you,' Miss Moore said when the hour had struck: and she rose up, and went to one of the windows, and stood looking out there while the children put away their books. Was Kate's conscience at all uneasy, do you think? You could not have told that it was by looking at her. She was talking just as the others did while they cleared the table; but yet she gave a

start when just at the end, as she was about to leave the room, Miss Moore turned round, and suddenly called to her to stop.

'Kate, you will stay with me for a few minutes. Go away, you two, and we will come and join you presently in the garden.'

And then the next moment Maud and Marjory had departed and closed the door behind them, and Kate, with a thunder cloud upon her brow, and rebellion in her heart, was left alone in the room with Miss Moore.

If she had dared to disobey Miss Moore she would have done it, and would have gone away with the other two; but, somehow, she did not dare to disobey her, for happily there is an instinct of obedience in most human hearts, so that, though we may long many a time to rebel against the people who are set over us, in point of fact we only do rebel very rarely. Kate certainly might have resisted Miss Moore, and have marched out of the room, and she undoubtedly wished to do so most heartily; and yet when Miss Moore said 'Stop,' she stayed still where she was.

She was standing in the middle of the floor when the door closed behind Maud and Marjory,—a bright-

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eyed, angry-faced young creature; not looking as if she could be tamed or mollified easily; not looking sensitive, as Marjory had a trick of doing even when she was naughty, but only defiant and hard. She stood so, and Miss Moore, with her back to the light, stood too, and looked at her for a few moments; and then she suddenly came forward, and took the bull by the horns.

'Now, Kate, tell me your cause of offence against me,' she said in her quick, clear, decided voice. 'What have I done that has made you dislike me? Why have you made up your mind to treat me in this way?'

The child had expected to be scolded for having been insolent (poor Kate in her brief existence had been often scolded for insolence), and this address made her for a moment open her eyes. It made her open her eyes first, and then it a good deal confused her, for she was quite accustomed to be scolded, and to receive rebukes in stolid silence; but she was not accustomed at all to be asked questions of this sort that Miss Moore had asked, and the close prospect of having to answer them was naturally a little startling to her. In fact it was so startling that, to tell the truth, it

quite upset her self-possession, for she looked first into Miss Moore's face, and then she flushed up like a red rose, and then in quite a helpless way she blurted out—'I don't know what you mean;' and couldn't think of another word to say.

'Then come and sit down, and I will tell you what I mean,' Miss Moore replied; and, taking Kate's hand, she led her to a chair, and as soon as they were seated side by side—

'If you saw somebody fighting, Kate, and the fight seemed rather hard, and you could either help him or give him a blow in the face, what would you do?' she said. 'Would your impulse be to give him the blow, do you think? Come, Kate, yes or no! Either you would give him a blow or you wouldn't. If he were fighting in his own defence, and only because he was obliged, do you think you would give that blow and make it harder for him?'

'No!' said Kate, half indignantly, with a little gulp.

She was sitting with her face very hot, and hanging down her head, knowing pretty well what Miss Moore was about, and yet not knowing how to baffle her,—as she would have done if she could.

'Then, if you wouldn't give a blow to him, why should you give one to me?' said Miss Moore.

'Am I not likely to have a hard fight of it here amongst you? Look—you are all angry because I have come in place of Miss Young; and because you loved her you set yourselves against me, and because I have ways of my own that are not like Miss Young's, you resolve to resist me and my ways together; and you don't listen to your judgment at all in the matter, nor even to your heart, except in one little bit of it; for if you listened to the whole of your heart, Kate, do you think it would not tell you that I deserved something like justice from you? I have come here not to harm you, but to try and do you good, and yet you treat me like an enemy; I am a stranger amongst you, and a stranger cares for a little kindness, but you give no kindness to me; you try to make my work as hard as you can, and when I am fighting my best to do it you come and give me that blow that we were speaking of. Is all that generous, Kate? If you heard of another person doing it would you approve of her and think that she was in the right?'

Miss Moore paused for an answer, but no answer came. She could not even see Kate's face, for the child had half dropped it and half turned it away: the only part that she could see was the cheek nearest to her, which was crimsoned all over.

There was a little silence, and then, as Kate said nothing, Miss Moore had to go on speaking.

'Kate, I have something to propose. Do you think we could make a compact together?' she said suddenly. 'Look here, we dislike one another very much, you know.' (If Kate had looked up at this moment I think she would have seen something very like laughter quivering in the corners of Miss Moore's mouth: but then she didn't look up, and so she had no idea of it.) 'You think me a terribly disagreeable woman, and I haven't found you a very nice child; but what would you say to our trying to suspend judgment of one another for a week? Suppose we were to begin at the beginning again, and try just for one week to make the best of one another. A week is not a long time; it would soon pass; and if the experiment failed, you know, we could take to disliking one another again at the end of it quite comfortably, as if there had been no interruption at all in the business. Come, Kate, if you will try, I will. Just for one little week see if you can't make the best of me.'

She gave a laugh, and suddenly put her arm about the child, and turned her face round to her. It was a flushed, half-sulky face still; but yet, as Miss

Moore turned it round, the eyes raised themselves for a moment with something in them that was better than sulkiness,—an almost pathetic look,—a look that seemed to ask, half angrily, half reproachfully, 'Are you only laughing at me?' I think Miss Moore saw and understood it. She saw a good many things out of those dark eyes of hers,—a good many more things perhaps than Kate suspected yet.

She turned the hot face round, and then she took Kate's hands suddenly into hers.

'Kate, will you do it?' she said. 'Will you help me and not thwart me, just for one week?'

'But I don't know what you want me to do?' Kate blurted out in rather a helpless way; and then the next moment her eyes and Miss Moore's met, and all at once she burst out laughing, or rather she burst into something that was half crying and half laughing both together; and by the time she had recovered from that little outbreak to her own amazement she knew that Miss Moore had kissed her, and that she had kissed Miss Moore, and that somehow she stood pledged to do the thing that Miss Moore had asked. All which was very bewildering; so bewildering, indeed, that as she went away pre-

sently to get her hat she didn't quite know whether she was walking on her heels or on her head.

It was bewildering to herself, and it was bewildering to the other children too, for, as she and Miss Moore came out into the garden together, Maud and Marjory saw by her hot face that something noticeable had happened; but instead of her quitting Miss Moore's side to pour out the story—which, of course, they at once concluded would be a story of wrongs suffered at their governess's hands—into the sympathetic ear of Maud, she chose in the most inexplicable way to keep close by Miss Moore's side, for all the world as if she was ashamed (which in very truth she was) to look Maud in the face.

It was so singular that it quite disturbed the children's minds. 'What has she been saying to you?' Maud took the first available opportunity of eagerly whispering in her ear, in tones of unrestrained amazement; but Kate merely made a lunge at her with her shoulder, in an awkward self-consciousness, and refused to utter a word. How could she tell Maud what Miss Moore had been saying? and still less how could she tell her what she herself had been brought to say and do? I am afraid that during this little walk before dinner Kate was not very happy

in her mind, or much in charity with herself, or Miss Moore, or Maud.

And yet she kept by Miss Moore's side, and Miss Moore talked to her, and Kate knew that she was talking pleasantly, and that in a sort of way she liked to listen to her. Moreover, in the face of her promise, was it not her duty to listen to her, and walk beside her, and treat her—*not* as she had treated her hitherto? They merely went for a half hour's walk along a straight country road, but during that half hour Maud never had it in her power to exchange two sentences privately with Kate.

Of course, however, a private conversation was obliged to come sooner or later, and between the ending of afternoon lesson and tea-time it did come. They had gone out of doors again then, and after a little while Maud plucked Kate by the sleeve, and pulled her away from the other two, and, quite unable to bear her curiosity any longer, burst into an impatient question before they were almost so far away from Miss Moore as to be well out of hearing.

'What in the world have you and she been doing with one another?' cried Maud, with round wide-open eyes fixed on Kate's face: and then, though she did

it most awkwardly and confusedly, Kate had to make her confession.

'She made me say what I did: I couldn't help it,' said Kate. 'When she said all that about giving her a blow, and not being generous to her—well, you know it made one feel as if one must be so horrid. Of course I don't like her,—and all that, but it isn't her fault that Miss Young went away; one can't say that it is; and I suppose we have no right to worry her,' said Kate slowly. 'At any rate I have said that I won't worry her for a week, so I must keep my promise, you know. It doesn't much matter for a week, one way or the other. She said (I think she 's very odd!) that at the week's end if I liked I could begin to hate her again.'

'Hm!' said Maud thoughtfully, and the girls walked on for a little way in silence.

'I hope she won't come and talk to *me* next,' Maud began again after a pause.

'I daresay she will,' said Kate. (And to tell the truth she said it rather as if she hoped Miss Moore might; for in fact Kate was not fond of rowing in a boat alone, but would much have preferred, if she herself were drawn into making strange compacts with Miss Moore, that Maud should be drawn into making

them too.) 'I dare say she will; she will do that or something else to you—at least, unless you give in.'

'But I don't know that I'm standing out,' said Maud in rather an aggrieved tone. 'I have never said any of the things to her that you have.'

'You have never said them to her face. You have said quite as bad as I have behind her back,' answered Kate a little severely.

And then Maud thought it just as well not to pursue that special line of self-defence.

'If she does talk to you I believe she will make you say quite as much as I did. I'm sure I said very little,' resumed Kate rather pathetically, after another silence.

'Hm!' once more said Maud, pretty dubiously.

'I hardly spoke a word at all. She did all the speaking. I suppose she is very clever,' said Kate, thoughtfully.

'I hate clever people; they're so sharp. I like people like ourselves,' said Maud.

'Well, she isn't a bit like ourselves; there's no doubt of that,' Kate replied.

And then they both dropped into a meditative silence, which lasted till presently Marjory, falling be-

hind Miss Moore, addressed them as they came near her in an appealing voice.

'I wish you wouldn't leave me alone with her! It's too bad of you two to get together, and leave me always to go with her by myself,' said Marjory, reproachfully.

'Well, you can stay with Maud if you like,' said Kate; and then, though she felt rather shy about it, she went forward and took Marjory's place by Miss Moore's side.

'My dear, you can remain with your sisters if you wish,' said Miss Moore, turning her head for a moment as Kate came up.

She turned her head, and then she stood still, for Kate, while talking to Maud, had unconsciously given a jerk to her hat which had set it all sideways on her head, and she looked so peculiar that Miss Moore began to laugh.

'Wait a moment. Your hat is crooked; have you been catching your head in a branch? There!—that is right again,' said Miss Moore. 'Now go back to your sisters, if you wish.'

'But I don't wish,' answered Kate, in rather a mumbling sheepish way.

'Very well then; stay with me.'

And, accepting her companionship without another word, Miss Moore walked on, and Kate walked by her side.

'She's gone over to the enemy,' said Maud to Marjory with a little sneer.

'Gone over to Miss Moore? Oh, what a shame!' cried Marjory, with the colour springing up into her face. 'But you're not going over too; are you, Maud?'

'Well, no,—I suppose not,' said Maud, rather undecidedly.

'I think it would be mean and horrid if you did!'

'Well, Kate says that it's horrid not to.'

'Horrid not to go over to Miss Moore?' Marjory looked at her sister in blank amazement.

'Because it isn't her fault that she's here,' explained Maud.

'Nobody ever said it *was* her fault, but—oh Maud, surely you don't like her?' cried Marjory almost piteously.

'I don't like her—of course; but still, I suppose we can't help it now.'

'And so you mean to forget Miss Young, and everything we have said, and you mean to be friends

with her?' Marjory cried out this with her angry little face all alight.

'I don't mean anything. Just you hold your tongue,' answered Maud, impatiently.

And consequently Marjory did hold her tongue, and except for one single additional sentence uttered fervently, kept the rest of her thoughts to herself.

'Well, whoever may mean to be friends with her, I won't! I can't bear her!' was what Marjory said with her foolish little child's lips; and then, feeling no doubt more comfortable after delivering herself of this bit of wrath, she walked on by Maud's side, and began to hum tunes to herself. She used to sing very prettily, with a clear sweet voice that was as true as a bird's, and even when she did not sing aloud, but went merely warbling half below her breath, some people thought it pretty and liked to hear her. Miss Moore liked, for one; but Marjory did not know that, nor, if she had known, would she have done her warbling to please Miss Moore.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS MOORE herself, however, could sing too, and make people glad to listen to her. On the evening of this same day she went to the piano to sing a verse of an old song to Kate. It was something they had been talking of, and she sat down and sang it, and presently, because Kate asked her, she went on singing for a long time. The twilight came on while she stayed at the piano, and all the children ceased their work and listened to her. She seemed to remember so many things without wanting any music. When Miss Young had been used to sing to them she had always needed to have her notes before her, and she had only known a few songs which she sang very often, and perhaps in course of time the children (except Marjory) had got a little tired of hearing them; but Miss Moore gave one the feeling as though if she pleased she could go on singing and

playing new things all night, for one followed another, and she glided on from one to another so quietly and easily, as if endless songs were on her lips and at her fingers' ends.

'How *can* you remember so much? How nice it must be!' Kate said almost with a little sigh of pleasure when she rose up at last.

'Yes, I remember a great many things. I have always remembered them very easily.' Miss Moore answered. 'My mother used to sing some of these songs to me when I was a little child.'

They had passed a pleasant evening together; it really had been so pleasant that they could not deny that. Miss Moore had read aloud to them after tea, and then they had sat talking till she went to the piano. She had talked, and she had made Kate and Maud—but especially Kate—talk too; for Kate, of course, being bound by her promise, had felt herself compelled not to be sulky, and had really done her best to second Miss Moore's attempt to make them all sociable, and the result had been, to tell the truth—though she was a little shy of confessing it—that she had enjoyed herself very much. She had enjoyed herself, and so, indeed, in a quiet way, had Maud, and the only one who had not was obstinate little

Marjory, who had chosen to sit in her window seat all night, and would not allow herself to be drawn into laughing or talking or doing any other pleasant thing,—like the faithful foolish little child that she was.

This evening, too, was only the beginning of good things, for next day you can't think how much more smoothly and agreeably everything went on in the schoolroom. There was no more bickering or disputing; Kate knew her lessons and said them as well as she could, and Miss Moore on her side made the school hours more interesting than school hours to Kate had ever been before. They had thought that she was so stiff and quiet and cold at first: that was what they would have said of her the first day and the second day; but on the third day Kate did not find her stiff or cold. She threw her heart so into the work she did; she seemed so full of life; somehow—she hardly knew how—Kate found herself appealing to her, and listening to her, in a way in which she had never appealed or listened to Miss Young in all her life. She seemed to know so much, to be able to tell her so much. The child sat at her place beside the table, with her eyes turning always more and more often to the square, clear-cut, pale face. She was a clever girl, with a natural love of

learning in her, a passion for asking questions, a general thirst for knowledge. She had asked so many questions hitherto in her life to which she had got no answers; now she put her questions, and the answers came, and she began to feel much as one would on finding a well in a parched land.

There was no doubt that she and Miss Moore got on very pleasantly this morning—so pleasantly that Marjory's little heart swelled and grew hot at seeing it, and Maud opened her eyes more than once in blank surprise, for Maud on her part was not much in love with learning; she was a placid girl, who liked to take her learning, as well as most other things, calmly and easily, and was not fond of excitement or trouble —even the trouble of making up her mind. She rarely, indeed, did make up her mind about anything, but usually adopted Kate's opinions in a gentle second-hand sort of way, and if she did not really like the same things that Kate liked, yet imagined that she liked them,—which in general did almost or quite as well.

But to-day Kate put her out, because she did not know how, on the sudden, to feel about Miss Moore as Kate all at once seemed to be feeling. Maud listened with only a languid interest while Kate put

her quick questions, and while Miss Moore answered them. Kate's questions seemed to Maud only foolishly to interrupt the lessons. What was the use of making lessons last so long, Maud thought, almost in an aggrieved way, instead of saying them straight off and getting done with them? Maud never lingered over the portions of them that fell to her share; why couldn't Kate make short work of her parts too? But Kate seemed so resolved not to make short work of her parts; and apparently Miss Moore was of the same mind as Kate, for she let her ask a score of things,—some of them so far removed from the subject that they had in hand that it was really quite absurd.

'You know, if you go on like this we shall never get through our lessons at all,' Maud urged pathetically once, after they had actually spent a whole half-hour in saying two pages of history that ought not to have taken them ten minutes; but, curiously enough, Kate did not seem to feel the force of Maud's remark. You see, Kate was enjoying herself, and Maud was not; and that makes such an amazing difference in the way in which we look at things.

But yet though Kate, in a sort, was enjoying herself, and continued to enjoy herself as long as the

school-hours lasted, I don't know that on the whole she was very much more at ease with Miss Moore than Maud was when those hours were ended; for it must be so difficult—don't you think it must?—to be at ease with a person whom you are only treating well because you have bound yourself to do so by a promise. Not only on this day, but on the days that followed, Kate was often shy of Miss Moore when lessons were over. They used to go out and walk and talk together; but often when they were walking together Kate was wondering all the time what Miss Moore meant to do when this week of truce came to an end, and puzzling herself to try and determine what she *wished* Miss Moore would do. For really it was very difficult to make up her mind as to what she wished; it was so difficult that she used to get quite cross over it, and so touchy about Miss Moore altogether that Maud, before the week was ended, found their governess quite an irritating subject to talk of,—which was rather hard for Maud, I think, who, as usual, wanted to decide what to think about Miss Moore by finding out what Kate thought; and yet, from Kate being in such an odd temper about her, could not by any means do it.

'I don't know whether I like her or whether I

don't; I don't know whether she's nice or not; I don't know anything about her, and I don't care!' Kate exclaimed once, losing her temper even to the extent of not speaking the truth, one day when Maud was dropping out weak little questions and wonderings that at the moment the other couldn't bear. 'I'm getting sick of Miss Moore! Can't you leave her alone, and talk of something else?' said Kate in her hot unreasonable way.

For, you see, when our minds are in an unsettled state it is sometimes grievous, and a thing that makes us savage, to be asked questions for the settling of other people's minds, just as if our own perplexities didn't give us enough to do. Kate, during these days, thought that she had quite enough to do in the settling of her own perplexities; and so it happened more than once that she lost her temper with Maud, and told her to hold her tongue when she talked about Miss Moore. Couldn't she hold her tongue, and let Kate wait and see what Miss Moore meant to do?

For the days were passing on, and Kate did not know what was to come at the end of them. She did not know, but yet she sorely wanted to know. A week ago—it was only a week yet since Miss Moore

had come—she would so gladly have got rid of her again, and have sent her out of the house and brought back Miss Young; but now was she quite sure, do you think, that she regretted Miss Young's departure so very much? If it had been in her power to do it, was she quite certain that she would have swept Miss Moore away and brought Miss Young back? There came a day—it was the last day before their week of truce ended—when she almost knew that it would be like sending them all to sleep again for Miss Moore to go away.

Miss Moore and Kate had had a long walk that day together, and they had talked—or Miss Moore at least had talked—about some grave and high things—talk that was partly above the child's comprehension, possibly, but yet that she liked none the less for that; for some of the best things we try to learn are things we never more than partly understand. Kate had walked by Miss Moore's side, listening and thinking. She was a large-brained girl, and the world in which she lived had been till now a very narrow world. Often when Miss Moore talked to her she felt much as she might have done if some one had struck out a window suddenly in a blank wall, and let the sunlight in.

That evening, when she bade Miss Moore good night, she did it with an almost wistful feeling of regret and speculation in her heart. Her week had ended. What would have happened before another night should come? Had Miss Moore perhaps forgotten all about their compact? She looked into Miss Moore's face, but she could read nothing to enlighten her there.

'Good night,' she said rather pathetically, and Miss Moore asked kindly, 'Are you tired, Kate?' But Kate said, No, she wasn't tired; still, however, in rather a tragic way; and then went off to bed with her unanswered question. How did she want to have it answered? She fell asleep—as she had fallen asleep on other nights—before she had answered that.

I don't for my own part think that Miss Moore was a woman very likely to forget either compacts or any other things. The next morning she gave Kate a skein of silk to hold for her while she wound it, and suddenly, while she was winding it, and they were sitting close together, and there was no one besides themselves in the room—

'Well, Kate, what is to happen now?' she all at once said, and as she said this she looked up, in an abrupt way that she had, and caught Kate's eyes.

It was only a momentary glance, for Kate at the question became so conscious and abashed that she almost instantly looked down, and, instead of making any sensible answer, the only thing that she could think of to say at all, after a second or two, was—'I don't know,'—in the coldest and bluntest voice imaginable.

'And I don't know either,' replied Miss Moore, 'so I suppose we must have a talk about it.'

She had nearly finished winding the skein of silk, so she wound it to the end, and then she put the reel away into her work-box; and it was only after she had done all this that she said another word. She folded her hands deliberately on her lap, and turned to Kate then, and said:

'For my own part, you know, I have liked this week.'

'So have I!' said Kate, after a moment, sharply, and almost ungraciously.; and then the quick brown eyes went up again for a second with a question in them, but dropped once more immediately.

'Peace is better than war, Kate.'

'Of course it is!' said Kate, indignantly.

'Only you didn't think so, you know, a week ago.'

And then Kate had not another word to say.

'You thought a week ago, you remember, that war was a great deal better than peace, and that it was your business to fight with me, and dislike me, and drive me away, I suppose, if you could. Now, Kate, I don't like to be fought with, or to be disliked, or to be driven away.'

Miss Moore said this looking straight before her into Kate's face, and Kate flushed all over, and answered nothing. Not but what she would have *liked* to answer something if she could, only the right words would not come. The right words have such a way of not coming when they are wanted! Some got almost to the tip of Kate's tongue now, but yet they stuck when they had reached that point, and would advance no farther. So then, after a little pause, Miss Moore had to speak again:

'I don't like to be fought with, Kate. If you want to fight with me again I shall have to fight with you, and to beat you; but I shall be more sorry to do that than you can think. I don't want us to fight; I want us to trust one another, and be kind to one another.'

'I'm sure'—said Kate quickly, and then stopped, in her awkward abashed way.

She was not a shy girl usually; but somehow it was very hard to her to speak to Miss Moore. Though she had really given up her opposition to her, yet it was very hard to her to confess that she had given up her opposition, and that she wanted to be friends with her. Maud could have done this much more easily than Kate, for Maud was rather a caressing child, and she would have sidled up to Miss Moore, or have looked penitent, and put up her face to be kissed, and have got the matter managed so without any need of words: but Kate was not caressing, and she couldn't get the matter settled so. She had to look up with her brown eyes into Miss Moore's face, and say certain definite words before she could get it settled.

'So, after two or three moments' silence, she managed to begin to speak again.

'I am sure I should like to trust you. I know you have been very kind. I don't know why you should think *I* want to fight now any more than you do,' said Kate, rather ungraciously, and at the last words a little indignantly too.

'But *I* never wanted to fight at all, Kate.'

And then there was a moment's silence.

'Did you think I did?'

'No, I don't mean that.' Kate said this hanging her head.

'I never wanted to be anything but friends with you.'

'I know it was all my fault.'

'Yes, I think it *was* all your fault.'

And then Kate sat still, very hot and very shame-faced, and with a feeling in her heart that it was not a pleasant thing by any means to confess her wrong-doings to Miss Moore.

'I think it was all your fault,' Miss Moore began again after a moment or two's silence; 'but faults that come from feelings that are right and kind are not things that are very hard to pardon, Kate. You set yourself against me because you loved Miss Young, and because you could not bear to see a stranger where you had had her so long. Well, that was hard for me, perhaps; and it was possibly a foolish thing to do, too; but, after all, it would have been worse if you had *not* cared for Miss Young.'

Miss Moore paused here and Kate looked up enquiringly, but made no answer, not quite sure yet of the line of argument that Miss Moore was taking up; and after a moment or two Miss Moore went on again.

'It would have been worse for you if Miss Young had been here for five years, and you had never recognised her goodness (for I think she must have been very good) enough to regret her going when she left you, or to feel that it would cost you something to see another person in her place. I think it was quite natural for you to feel that it was hard to see me in her place; that feeling was not the wrong thing in you, Kate; the wrong thing was the resolve you made to make *me* know too that you felt it hard. For you had no right to visit either your anger or your sorrow upon me. You set yourself in the wrong when you determined to let your love for Miss Young make you unjust to me.'

'I know that,' said Kate, half below her breath, after a little silence.

And then there was all at once an abrupt pause. Kate didn't know what more to say, and Miss Moore seemed to have exhausted all that she had intended should be said. They both sat without speaking for a minute or more, and then all at once Miss Moore gave a little sudden laugh, and—

'Well, Kate, at the end of it, what are we going to do? Are we going to be friends?' she said. 'You know, if you decide to be friends I don't promise you

an easy time with me. I think you have had too easy a time hitherto, and if you and I are to go hand in hand I give you warning that you won't get your own way with me always. But I think I, for one, should like to try if we couldn't work together. So come, Kate, what do you say?'

She rose as she spoke, and, half laughing still, she put her hand out. I don't suppose she doubted much that the child would take it; I imagine she knew very well that Kate wanted to be friends with her, and that even already she might have done with her pretty well what she liked. She got up laughing, and she laughed again when after a moment Kate put her arms about her neck.

That day when they were out walking Maud said to Kate—

'If Miss Young were here now we would make her let us go to Shandon' (Shandon Wood was a place two or three miles off, that the children were very fond of). 'Oh dear, I wish Miss Young was here!'

'I wish she was,' said Kate.

But after she had made this answer her conscience began to prick her, because she knew she did not mean the same thing by it that Maud had meant. Maud meant that she wished Miss Young was here

again instead of Miss Moore, and in her heart Kate knew that she did *not* want Miss Young to be here instead of Miss Moore. So her conscience began to make her uneasy, and, after a few moments' silence :

'But I don't want Miss Young here and Miss Moore gone, you know,' said Kate.

'Don't you?' exclaimed Maud, and opened her eyes. 'Why, you don't mean surely that you like Miss Moore better than Miss Young?'

'I like Miss Moore best to say lessons to,' said Kate, boldly.

'Oh, dear, I don't!' exclaimed Maud, who honestly preferred the easy time she had had with Miss Young very much indeed.

'I like Miss Young herself best,—of course,' said Kate; 'but as far as teaching goes—' and then Kate began to get rather hot and to speak rather with difficulty—'as far as teaching goes I think it's very much like being put into another world. I mean, I never cared for any lesson I ever said to Miss Young, but—but when Miss Moore teaches you—I don't know how to put it—but she makes you feel about all kinds of things as Miss Young never made you feel about anything—just as if you were all stirred up,' said

Kate, flushing to the roots of her hair, and finishing her confession nervously and bunglingly, as the habit of young things is.

But she had made it, and she stuck to it; though Maud opened her eyes as round as saucers, and burst out laughing at her last words.

CHAPTER VIII.

SO Miss Moore won her victory over Kate; but there was a person in the house harder than Kate to win, and she had got no victory, nor even any approach to a victory, over her yet. She was a stiff-necked, perverse little thing, that bright-eyed child Marjory, with her warm heart, and her strong will, and her passionate love for the things and the people that she knew. A most unreasonable and impracticable little soul. She had her good qualities, but I am afraid there was some truth at least in what her sisters always said of her—that she was very nearly as obstinate as a young mule.

Of course she was very obstinate to go on thinking of Miss Young in the way she did, clinging to her so closely that her love for her made her set herself against Miss Moore; but yet you can understand how she should do it,—for had anybody ever loved her as

Miss Young had done? All these five years how good Miss Young had been to her! how kind she had been—how patient she had always been! The child's heart when Miss Moore came was aching so still for the loss of her friend. Some children go instinctively to what is new, liking the excitement of a new face, but Marjory had a way of always loving the things that were oldest best. Her heart stuck by them, and if you tore her from them you made a wound that a strange hand could not heal.

But yet she was such a wrong-headed foolish little thing! I wonder what harm she supposed she did Miss Moore when she said her lessons ill to her, when she would not try to please her, when she looked stolid and uninterested while she talked? She hardly benefited Miss Young, I think, by doing these things, and surely she did not benefit herself: so, unless she did either good or ill to Miss Moore, her proceedings altogether, I fear, were rather thrown away. But probably in her heart she did think that she did some harm to Miss Moore, and though she might not perhaps have been quite clear as to what it was, yet, I daresay, her belief in it gave some comfort to her. For she wanted to be disagreeable to Miss Moore. She wanted to be disagreeable to her, and to worry her, and to show her

that she did not like her : and certainly she succeeded in doing at any rate the first and last of these things. As for worrying Miss Moore, that was another matter; there are some phlegmatic people who *won't* be worried, you know.

I don't certainly think, for my own part, that you could have worried Miss Moore easily. She had a way of laughing at little vexations, and throwing them aside from her, as a duck throws off water from its back. You couldn't tease her though you wanted to do it; she was so bright, quick, and self-possessed that she would not submit to teasing. Marjory, when a spirit of evil had come into her (and a spirit of evil had been in the habit of coming into her now and then), had occasionally teased Miss Young, and at moments given that gentle woman a great deal to bear; but Miss Moore had been only a very few days in the house when she found, dislike her as she would, that she could no more treat Miss Moore as she had sometimes treated Miss Young, than she could get the moon by crying for it, or gather strawberries at Christmas. You see, Miss Young had been very weak, and Miss Moore was not weak at all; and in a pair of women that makes an amazing difference. The children had had a very loose and gentle hand over

them during Miss Young's reign; they had got a hand over them now that, whether it was gentle or not, at any rate was not loose, and Marjory, with all her hot unreasonable little heart prepared to rise against Miss Moore whatever she had been, resented the difference.

In fact, she was a troublesome little thing,—that was the truth of it. She was resolved to be disagreeable and perverse. Sometimes, when Miss Moore said to her, 'Do so and so,' she would not do it; sometimes when Miss Moore talked to her she would not even pretend to listen; one day—but it was only once—she openly defied and rebelled against her. That was a day, however, that Marjory remembered afterwards with rather a burning at her heart, and a sense of humiliation, for I must confess that it was not Marjory in the little encounter that took place between them who came off the conqueror.

It was a hot August morning, and the schoolroom had got close, and the flies had been buzzing, and the children were tired and not in a mood for lessons, I suppose. Miss Moore had seen that they were tired, and had arranged with the two elder girls—as she had done once or twice before lately—to give up the saying of certain lessons for the moment, and to take them later, in the cool of the day. But Marjory's

lessons, which were shorter and easier than Kate's or Maud's, she had not arranged to take late in the day, and so, just when the morning was hottest, Marjory came up with her spelling book in her hand, to spell out half a page of words, and give the meanings of them.

She had been learning her lessons carelessly enough altogether since Miss Moore came. In reality the child liked her lessons, but yet, because she was in such a perverse humour, she would not let herself like them, nor do them well. She had at all times had a little difficulty in learning her spelling; it had been rather a sore subject to her occasionally even in Miss Young's time; but she had cared to please Miss Young, and so she had taken pains to learn it; but now she took no pains to learn it at all, because she did not want to please Miss Moore. She had learnt this particular lesson worse even than usual, but she stood quite stolid and indifferent as Miss Moore asked her word after word almost in vain, and not a change came over the little face even when at the end of three or four unsuccessful minutes Miss Moore put the book down, and ceased from her useless effort.

'You have hardly tried to learn this at all, Marjory. This is the third day running that I have had to give

you your spelling lesson back,' Miss Moore said, gravely.

The child made no answer, but took the book rather roughly and went away. Of course she had known that the lesson would be returned to her; even Miss Young would have returned so ill-learnt a lesson as that. She went back to her place, and sat down, but she did not relearn her spelling: instead of doing that she began to read 'The Peasant and the Prince,' with her back half turned to Miss Moore. Perhaps she did not care much whether Miss Moore saw her or not. Miss Moore expected her to relearn her lesson, of course; but she cared very little for what she might expect.

At the end of half an hour or so Miss Moore called to her again.

'Marjory, bring back your spelling to me now,' she said.

'I don't know it any better,' replied Marjory, rudely, without even turning round.

'If you don't know it any better, why are you reading instead of learning it?'

And then there was no answer.

'Marjory,' said Miss Moore, calmly, at the end of a few seconds, 'bring your book and come here.'

There was rather an unusual stillness in the room: the other two girls had stopped what they were doing, and were looking up. They both knew that Marjory was an obstinate little thing, and they wanted to see how Miss Moore would do battle with her.

The child rose slowly, and came up to the table, and stood there doggedly. She turned her shoulder to Miss Moore, instead of turning her face to her, but Miss Moore, by a dexterous movement, wheeled her round, and made her front her. If they had been on different terms with one another I think the best thing Miss Moore could have done would have been to take her on her knees and shake and laugh and shame her into submission; but their terms together being what they were she could not do this; she had to keep her on the floor before her, and subdue her by authority, not by kindness.

'You have not looked at this lesson since I gave it back to you?' she said.

'No,' answered Marjory, shortly.

'Then you don't mean to learn it any better?'

No answer to this.

'Do you expect me to pass it over, and not hear it again?'

No answer still.

'Because I am not going to do that. I do not wish you to learn it now: I do not want you to have any more lessons now of any kind; but, Marjory, understand this—you shall not go to bed to-night until you have said that spelling well.'

And then Miss Moore rose up, and Marjory turned her back, and went away again, with the colour in her face.

'She can't make me learn it!' cried the child hotly to herself, and sat down, quivering all over, and read, or tried to read, her book again. Perhaps she was a little uneasy in her conscience—a little afraid, possibly, of the next move Miss Moore might make; but yet she said boldly to herself, 'She can't make me learn it,' and each time she said that she felt comforted and reassured. Miss Moore might punish her for being disobedient, but she did not care for that; she would not learn her lesson, whether she got punished or not. So she said all through the afternoon; so she said when the day got cool and they all gathered round the table to have tea; and so she was still saying an hour afterwards,—when her heart suddenly gave a great leap, for Miss Moore came up to the schoolroom window where she was sitting, and laid her hand upon her arm.

'Marjory,' said Miss Moore, 'will you bring your spelling book and come with me?'

'Where to?' said Marjory, startled and alarmed.

'I will show you where.'

And then Miss Moore took Marjory quietly by the hand, and—very much as if she had no will of her own—Marjory found herself provided with her spelling book, and calmly and resolutely carried from the room.

She went passively, for she was eight years old, and at eight one is rather too old to resist and scream. She might have resisted and screamed, indeed, and if she had done that she possibly might still—far as things had gone—have had the best of it; but then the proceeding would have been an undignified one, and—well, in fact, Marjory did not think of adopting it. In rather an abashed and shame-faced way, and with her hand held fast in Miss Moore's, she crossed the schoolroom floor unresistingly; and then the door was closed behind her, and in another minute she found herself sitting on a chair in Miss Moore's bedroom, with Miss Moore by her side.

'Now,' said Miss Moore, 'we will learn this lesson together.' And without another word she opened the book. 'C-a-u, cau; t-i-o-u-s, tious, cautious,' began

Miss Moore. 'Spell the words after me, Marjory, as I spell them.'

For a few moments Marjory held her tongue.

'C-a-u,' Miss Moore said again, and paused; and then, slowly, unwillingly, almost sulkily—

'C-a-u,' said Marjory, low down in her throat.

'—t-i-o-u-s,' said Miss Moore.

'—t-i-o-u-s,' echoed Marjory, in the depths of humiliation.

Why did she repeat the letters after her? She asked herself that when the business was all ended, and she could not tell. Why had she let Miss Moore get her own way, and make her do the very thing that she had said in her heart she would not do? For Marjory learnt her lesson; that was the end of it. Miss Moore kept her sitting by her side for a mortal hour, repeating the words of the book from her mouth; and by the hour's end Marjory knew her half page of spelling more thoroughly than she had known most half pages of spelling in her life. Again and again and again, patiently and pitilessly, Miss Moore went through the lesson from end to end; and at the last Marjory said it off without missing a word. She was beaten completely; and she knew this, as at the hour's close she took her book back into her hand

and with a sad and sore feeling of defeat and shame, got up from her seat.

It was Miss Moore who had handed her back her book, shutting it as she silently returned it, as a sign that for to-night the battle was at an end. And then she got up. All through the hour that they had been together she had spoken very little to Marjory. Steadily and relentlessly she had done her teaching, but she had simply done her teaching and nothing more. She had not talked to Marjory, or tried, either seriously or jestingly, to make her feel what a foolish little thing she was. Perhaps she wanted purposely to make the hour a very dull one —such an hour as Marjory might be unwilling to have repeated. She was a very clever woman, and in what she did she probably had her own plan. She had tried before this to be kind to Marjory, and Marjory had resented her kindness; to-night, without either kindness or harshness, she simply set herself to break her will; and when it was broken she got up and let Marjory get up too, and go away.

I daresay Marjory on her side had not expected to be let off so. When Miss Moore marked the lesson for the next day, and then closed the book and gave it back to her, I think she expected that then some rebuke or lecture would follow, and, beaten though

she had been, she hardened her little heart against it in anticipation; but she did her hardening unnecessarily, for no lecture followed. Miss Moore rose up, and then they both went to the door, and Miss Moore opened it. Would Marjory, as she passed out, have felt less like a culprit if Miss Moore, before permitting her to escape, had scolded her, or appealed to her, or done anything rather than simply let her depart in silence? I think that she might, though she did not know it herself. For the moment, indeed, she knew it so little that she congratulated herself on getting off without what she had expected would be one portion of her punishment, and it was not at once but only afterwards that she began to feel, in some curious indefinable way, that if Miss Moore had done something else—if she had scolded her, or talked over her obstinacy with her, or made her cry—the whole business would have been easier to bear than it was now, when Miss Moore had done—simply nothing at all, but had merely let her go, burdened with the sense of her iniquities.

For, indeed, the poor little soul knew that she had been very bad, and she half knew, too, that she had no right to be bad to Miss Moore. She knew that Miss Moore had not been unkind to her. She had

been troublesome, and Miss Moore had been very patient, and a sense of justice within her made her feel that it would have been more comfortable to be punished—or at any rate to be lectured—for having been troublesome than to be let alone. When she had returned to the school-room, and had sat herself down again in the window-seat with her story-book upon her knee, I can hardly tell you what an uneasy feeling came gradually over her. She thought at first that it was wholly a feeling of shame because she had been defeated, but it was not wholly a feeling of shame; it was partly also a sense that she had done wrong, and that she had been neither punished nor forgiven.

She sat very quiet during the remainder of the evening. Rain had come on, and none of them were out of doors; the other girls were working and talking, and Miss Moore was writing letters. Marjory sat apart from them, trying to read, with her little heart heavy within her. When an hour had passed, and her bed-time came, she thought, and she was right, that Miss Moore said 'Good-night' to her more coldly and gravely than she had ever done before.

The children had gone downstairs, as it was their habit to do, at eight o'clock to spend a quarter of an

hour with their grandmamma, and then on their return, Marjory, who was usually dispatched first, went up to Miss Moore's side, or rather to within a yard of Miss Moore, and in a shame-faced enough way said 'Good-night.' 'Good-night, my dear,' Miss Moore was usually in the habit of answering, and, though she hardly ever kissed Marjory, yet as she held her hand she would often say a word or two kindly and pleasantly to her; but to-night she merely echoed her 'Good-night,' and touched her hand for a moment without looking up.

And then Marjory went away to bed, saying to herself that she did not mind one bit; but yet in her heart she knew that she had done wrong, and she *did* mind.

CHAPTER IX.

MISS MOORE had really hitherto been very kind indeed to Marjory; she had liked her and had taken some pains to win her, and make her tractable, and had been very patient and forbearing with her. When they went out for walks she had often taken her by her side, and talked to her, and told her stories, and had tried rather hard to make the tied tongue grow loose in return, and to awake some feeling of confidence in her. But after this night when they had had their little conflict together she gave up trying to do these things. I do not mean that she was not kind to Marjory still, but she was kind in a grave and formal way; she did not any longer talk to her or say bright pleasant things to her, as she had done at first; she let her, to a large extent, go her own way; and the child found herself suddenly, she hardly knew how, left alone as she had never been left alone before in all her life.

To tell the truth, too, she found that to be left alone was rather dull. I don't know that at any age most of us like much to be neglected, but I am very sure that when we are about Marjory's age we don't like it in the least. Marjory had been accustomed to be petted by Miss Young, and to be made a great deal of, and though she said to herself that she did not want Miss Moore to pet her now, still it was dreary to be nothing to anybody, which was the case with her at present; for the twins rarely wanted her when they could get one another; and her grandmamma did not want her, and Miss Young who had loved her best was gone. 'Oh, I wish Miss Young was here again! I wish she was here again!' the poor little girl would think sometimes, with her heart quite aching; and then she would sit over her story book, or her lessons, and would think lovingly of the past days when her friend who was gone had been used to come and take her on her knee, or lay her hand upon her hair, or only, it might be, give a bright, sweet look to her as she passed by, or say a word to her that was as kind as a kiss. No one looked brightly at her, or spoke tender words to her now, and the child felt the difference.

She used to do her lessons with Miss Moore very

lifelessly and coldly. At first, you know, she had done them badly, too,—I mean she had learnt them ill; but after that victory that Miss Moore had taken the trouble to win over her she did not do them badly in that way any more. Her vanity was hurt, you see, and she did not want to be conquered and humiliated again. So she gave up declining to learn her lessons, but she said them mechanically when they were learnt, as if she took no interest in them. She would not give Miss Moore the gratification of seeming to care about them. She would not do anything to please Miss Moore.

And yet, though she was so foolish, you may be sorry for her, for she was not happy. That warm little perverse heart of hers was sore within her, and very hot within her sometimes too; and she was very dull. 'They none of them cared for her as I did; they all seem to have forgotten her now,' she used to think; but yet the thinking that, though it comforted her a little, did not comfort her altogether; for it is a very pleasant thing to feel oneself to be faithful, but yet when being faithful makes one lead a very dull and solitary life, it is a little trying to the temper at the same time. If Marjory could but have been

faithful to Miss Young, and yet moderately happy and content too!

But she was only eight years old, and she did not see how it was possible to be both these things. If she were to be faithful to Miss Young, how could she be happy now that Miss Young was gone? That was one of the questions that had begun to puzzle her, and the answer to it was too hard for her to find. For sometimes, when she thought that because Miss Young was gone it might be her business to be doleful for ever, the prospect was certainly a little overwhelming. She did not want to be doleful for ever; but if she was not to be that, when was she to leave off being doleful? Marjory pondered this question day after day, and could not answer it.

She used to think about this, and she used to think also a good deal—more almost than she would have liked to acknowledge—about Miss Moore. You can't think how hard Marjory presently began to find it not to watch Miss Moore. She often watched her almost without knowing it: she used to sit listening to her while she heard the other girls their lessons; she used sometimes to take in more than anyone thought of what they said. In her heart the child would often have liked to take part in what they were

talking about—to ask questions, as Kate did—to be told things that she did not know; but she never did take part in it. She was half obstinate, half shy; she had been a petted little thing, and had grown accustomed to petting and coaxing, and now that nobody petted or coaxed her any more she felt lonely and strange. It would all have been set right, she used to think, if only Miss Young would return and bring back the old things again; but at present, in the extreme unlikelihood of Miss Young's return, how was she to feel otherwise than as if she had lost everything that loved her, and that she loved?

Everything but Zitta, she used to think. Zitta remained to her still, and when they all went out for walks together it would often have been very dull indeed for Marjory if she had not had Zitta to run after and play with: indeed, out of doors or indoors either, I don't know what she would have done without her little pet. The creature used to lie in her lap for hours, and comfort her in many of her small troubles: when they were out she was always frisking round her. She was the prettiest of tiny terriers—glossy as black satin—a little caressing, foolish, loving, winning thing. She was Marjory's own special

property, and there was nothing belonging to her that the child loved so well, or for whose safety and preservation she felt at times so much anxiety, for Mrs. Blandford looked with a severe eye on Zitta, thinking that Marjory wasted time upon her that might well be better spent, and not unfrequently gave hints and warnings as to the course it might be necessary to pursue if Marjory did not mend her ways in this respect, such as used at times to strike indignation and terror into the child's heart. For if they took Zitta from her too, would life any longer be worth having? Marjory, I believe, almost doubted if it would.

She took her little favourite with her almost everywhere: wherever Marjory went, there went Zitta too.

'I wonder whether Miss Moore will like Zitta!' Maud had said one day before Miss Moore came, a good deal to Marjory's indignation.

'I don't care whether she likes her or not!' she had exclaimed in reply to Maud quite recklessly—and very foolishly too; for in fact, I think, it mattered a good deal, and if Miss Moore had not liked Zitta, it might have been a serious business for Marjory. But happily they had taken to one another quite pleasantly,

and indeed, by the time Miss Moore had been a week in the house, there was nobody for whose lap Zitta showed a more decided taste than she did for hers, or whose hands she kissed more tumultuously. 'She's a bad little thing,' Marjory said sadly as she watched the growth of this rapid affection: but Zitta had lived with her by this time for a year, and she was used to her unfaithful ways. Zitta liked to make new friends: she was fonder of that process a good deal than Marjory was.

I must say that it was desirable for people to have a regard for Zitta, for she was a terrible deal of trouble at times. When you went out with her, for instance, she was quite a weight upon your mind. She was always losing herself, and needing you to devote your whole time and attention to finding her again; or else she was rushing into places where she shouldn't go, and where you had to follow her at all kinds of risks: or, if you were indoors, there was never a moment, except when she was asleep, that you could be sure that she was out of mischief. There was nothing that she wouldn't do. If she could catch sight of your work-box she would leap to it like a flash of light, and would snap the reels out of it one by one, and unwind their contents, and gnaw them, and deposit them

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where you might never find them again for weeks; she would whip out your thimble, and send it rolling perhaps under the fender; she would pick out pins and needles from your cushions, and prepare, or pretend to prepare to eat them, in a way that used to make Marjory's blood run cold. Marjory was always, indeed, rescuing something out of Zitta's mouth; and the number of hair-breadth escapes from killing herself with monstrous and unnatural food that befel Zitta in the course of almost every day was something quite prodigious.

But, of course, though she was the plague of her life, Marjory loved her all the better for that, and was never tired of being with her, and playing with her, and attending on her. Sometimes, however, she got Marjory into sad scrapes. One day, for instance, when Marjory and Zitta had been left alone together in the drawing-room, she did such a dreadful thing! She got under a table, and tore an Indian shawl of Mrs. Blandford's into ribbons. The shawl had been thrown upon a chair, and Zitta dragged it down upon the ground and worried it there, till in ten minutes—for it was a very thin, delicate shawl—she had got it all in shreds; and it was not till then—when it was too late to help any of the mischief—that

Marjory, who was reading a book that she liked very much, and had unhappily for the moment forgotten her charge, looked up, and found out what was done.

The child was not a coward, but you can hardly think what an agony of terror and distress came over her when she saw what Zitta's work had been. She knew how her grandmamma cared for that special shawl, not because of its beauty, though it was beautiful too, but because her husband had given it to her long ago, when she was young. There were few articles of dress which Mrs. Blandford possessed that she valued so much, and Marjory had known this all her life. And now it lay upon the ground, torn almost to tatters, one piece of it in Zitta's mouth, half-a-dozen shreds of it lying here and there, like bits of fluff, upon the carpet.

Marjory gave a scream of horror and sprang up, and rushed to where the triumphant little creature was standing, its front paws planted on its prey, its head wagging from side to side as if it would shake it off, as it tugged and tore to wrench off the strip that was between its teeth.

'Oh, Zitta!' cried poor Marjory, and sprang upon the little culprit and caught her in her arms, and by main force pulled the shawl from her mouth. 'Oh,

Zitta, what shall I do!' cried the child, and burst into an agony of tears.

What should she do indeed? She took the shawl up from the ground—Zitta wildly barking and leaping round her, and catching at the edges of it, and doing fresh mischief there—and tried to hold it out that she might see the extent of the evil that had happened to it; but Zitta's conduct made her doing that almost impossible. She only held it up for one moment—just for one miserable moment that made her heart sink down like a lump of lead.

The tears were trickling sorrowfully down her cheeks when, a couple of minutes afterwards, she presented herself at the school-room door, the shawl gathered into her arms, and Zitta still madly leaping at her heels. She had not punished Zitta, nor almost said an angry word to her, but she herself was sobbing aloud in her distress.

Her sisters were in the room, and Miss Moore, and they all looked up amazed as she came in in this doleful plight. Kate was reading aloud, and she put down the book and stared: for a moment or two they all stared, and then the poor little voice began to blurt its trouble out.

'O—h, I don't know what to do! Zit—Zitta

has torn this so!' sobbed poor little Marjory, and helplessly put down her burden on the school-room table, with a pitiful, vague, general appeal for sympathy and comfort.

'What!—Grandmamma's shawl!' cried Kate.

'Oh, Marjory!' exclaimed Maud, quite with a gasp.

'Zitta, come here!' said Miss Moore, and made a sudden dive at Zitta, who was still in the height of felicity, and, taking her in her arms, put her adroitly outside the door: then she joined the others at the table, and with grave faces they all looked at the outspread shawl.

The thing was ruined: there was not a square foot of it but was gnawed and torn—there was not a sound bit of it left anywhere. Poor Marjory looked at it in silence for a moment or two, and then burst into fresh sobbing.

'Oh, dear! what will grandmamma say!' cried Maud.

'How in the world did it happen? Was Zitta left alone in the drawing-room?' asked Kate.

'Oh, n—n—no; I was there,' sobbed Marjory.

'And you never saw him?'

'I was rea—reading.'

'But still, he must have made such a noise. Why, I can't think—!' said Kate, engrossed by her amazement.

'My dear,' interposed Miss Moore, 'the thing is done and it can't be helped. It is very unfortunate, but it will do no good now to get into this state about it. Come here, Marjory, and sit down quietly; poor child, you mustn't go on crying so. Try and not do it, dear: it will do no good.'

She took Marjory by the hand, and made her sit down by the open window, and stood beside her, speaking a few words to her soothingly, and once or twice, with something like a caress, touching her hair.

'You can't help it now. Hush, my dear—hush!' she said more than once.

But Marjory was very miserable, and could not stop her crying for a long while. Each time that she thought of what her grandmamma would say her tears broke forth afresh, and each time that she thought of the possible consequences to Zitta of her escapade she felt as if her heart would break. If her grandmamma should insist on sending Zitta away what should she do? how could she bear it? poor Marjory thought.

'It wasn't her fault; it was—it was all *my* fault,'

said the poor little thing again and again piteously, looking up even to Miss Moore's face for belief and sympathy. 'It all came because I was reading. Oh, I wish I hadn't been reading!' cried the child with a fresh burst of tears.

Mrs. Blandford was not at home. Kate and Maud had folded up the shawl and were both looking very grave.

'I am sure I don't know what grandmamma *will* say!' exclaimed Kate in a whisper, shaking her head.

'It 's all over with Zitta at any rate, I'm afraid,' answered Maud in the same tone: and then they sat down to their work quite subdued. Miss Moore also went back presently to her own occupation, and Marjory was left alone in the window with her heavy heart. Perhaps she felt even a little sadder and drearier than she had done before when Miss Moore went away and left her; but yet, when she liked her so little, what else could Miss Moore do?

After a while, for nobody seemed to have much to say, Miss Moore proposed that Kate should go on reading; so Kate opened her book again, and they read for some time. And then after that Miss Moore left the room.

She did not tell the others where she was going,

but what she did was to go downstairs, and, having found that Mrs. Blandford had come in, to follow her to the drawing-room, where she was resting after her walk.

'I have come to tell you about a very vexing thing,' she said; and then she sat down and told her how Zitta had eaten her shawl. 'Marjory was reading and did not see what she was about, and she dragged the shawl down upon the floor, and I daresay did all the mischief in a very few minutes.'

'And what amount of mischief *has* she done?' asked Mrs. Blandford, angrily.

'More than I like to tell you. You know how easily that shawl would tear. Zitta's teeth have torn it into ribbons.'

'Upon my word, that dog is a perfect nuisance in the house!' Mrs. Blandford exclaimed. 'You really mean that the shawl is ruined? that shawl that I valued so?'

'I am afraid it is,' said Miss Moore.

And then there was an uncomfortable pause.

'I shall certainly have the dog sent away.'

Mrs. Blandford broke the silence by angrily saying this.

'She is nothing but a torment to everybody in the

house, and Marjory is perfectly silly about her. It was inexcusable, with the child in the room, that the shawl should have been so treated. I cannot tell you how annoyed I am, Miss Moore. If Marjory had not been most thoughtless and careless—'

'Of course Marjory was to blame to some extent. She is quite conscious of that, poor child.'

'She ought to be punished. I must insist upon her being punished. I think, Miss Moore,' said Mrs. Blandford, very stiffly, 'you had better send her down to me here.'

'Will you let me first say a few words?' asked Miss Moore. And then (the child would have opened her sad eyes wide if she had heard her) she began to plead for Marjory. She pleaded for Marjory and for Zitta too; she begged Mrs. Blandford not to part the little one from her pet. 'Give her another trial,' she said. 'She was forgetful, no doubt, but I don't think she will be forgetful again. She is sick with fear now lest you should make her give Zitta up.'

The children used to think that their grandmamma was very hard and stubborn; in all their lives *they* had never dared to coax her or ask a favour from her; but perhaps she was less stubborn than they thought, or perhaps she liked Miss Moore or possibly even at

the bottom of her rather cold and formal heart, she, too, might have had some pity for poor Marjory, some feeling, however angrily she might speak, that would, in truth, have made her shrink from parting the child from the companion that she loved. However it might have been, at any rate Miss Moore did not do her little bit of pleading in vain. Marjory upstairs, sitting dejected in the window, knew very little how kind an advocate her little Zitta had, or guessed when Miss Moore came back into the room how much she owed her. Perhaps, indeed, if she felt anything, she might only have felt rather hot that Miss Moore should have been so quick to tell her grandmamma what Zitta and she had done. For she knew that Miss Moore *had* told, because when she returned to the school-room she brought Mrs. Blandford with her; and it was on the school-room table that the torn shawl was spread out, and gravely and almost silently examined.

'I am afraid it would be useless to think of having anything done with it,' said Miss Moore.

'Quite useless,' replied Mrs. Blandford, grimly.

And then poor Marjory sat hanging her head, and almost holding her breath in her anxiety.

Her grandmamma had not said anything to her

when she came into the room, nor did she say anything to her as long as she went on looking at her piece of ruined property: it was only after she had solemnly shaken her head over it two or three times, and at last had gravely gathered it together and folded it up, that she advanced to where the little culprit was sitting, and spoke to her.

'This has been a very unfortunate piece of work, Marjory,' she began, severely. 'I consider that you have been very greatly to blame—very greatly to blame indeed. How you could allow yourself to become so engrossed over a foolish story-book as not to notice what Zitta must have been doing almost before your eyes I cannot comprehend. You were most careless and negligent. And as for the dog—' here Mrs. Blandford paused for a moment, and Marjory's poor little heart in its terror almost stopped beating —'as for the dog, nothing but Miss Moore's request, that I will let you have another trial in taking better care of her, has made me consent to permit her to stay any longer in the house. She has been a most troublesome and mischievous animal ever since she came into it; and I tell you plainly, Marjory, that though I have consented to pass over what she has done to-day, a repetition or anything like a repetition of it will *not* be passed over. If you wish to keep her

you had better make it your business not foolishly to pet and nurse her as you do now all day, but to train her to such habits as will make her presence something else than a torment and a nuisance to every other person. This is all I wish to say to you; but I advise you, my dear, to think over it.'

Mrs. Blandford had a cold ungracious way of speaking, but she was not an unkind woman at the bottom of her heart. Perhaps, though she did it in a hard way, she was gladder just now to tell Marjory that she would let her keep her dog than she would have been to have passed sentence of banishment upon her. She did not want to vex the child; she only wanted—naturally—to have dogs and children both conduct themselves with propriety, which was what Zitta very rarely did, she not unreasonably thought.

Poor Marjory flushed up to the roots of her hair, and the tears came and trickled meekly down her cheeks as her grandmother spoke to her, but she made no answer to her; for when Mrs. Blandford gave little addresses of this kind it was never the habit of any of the children to reply to them. They had been brought up to obey Mrs. Blandford, but hardly dreamt any more of answering her when she preached little sermons to them than they would have dreamt of answering

the rector when he preached to them on Sunday. So Marjory sat hanging her head, with the tears slowly trickling down her cheeks, but she said never a word; and after a moment or two Mrs. Blandford turned away. The child was not angry or sulky: perhaps on the whole she might even think she had been treated better than she deserved; she was relieved from her worst fear too; but yet she sat mute as a little stone, even for a good while after her grandmamma had left the room.

The other three were talking, and she remained sitting by herself. After a time Zitta, who had been in hiding somewhere since her disgrace, put her little pointed nose in at the door, and, after cautiously looking round, dexterously inserted her whole body, and in a moment more was coiled on Marjory's knees into a little ball, covered over by her pinafore. That was how Zitta liked to lie, safe and warm, and out of sight. And then presently it began to get dusk, and Marjory put her arms close about her little pet, and laid her cheek down on her glossy coat.

What should she have done if her grandmamma had taken Zitta away from her? She could hardly bear to think of it even now when the danger was past. 'My own little doggie! My dear little

pet!' she whispered with her lips on placid Zitta's head, who, quite at ease alike in body and in conscience, lay fast and calmly asleep.

Would her grandmamma really have done what she had said? really and truly would she have sent her away if it had not been for Miss Moore? For a few minutes Marjory felt grateful to Miss Moore, and almost as if she would have liked to thank her; but after a while her feeling changed, and she said to herself, 'She didn't do it to please me; she only did it to please herself, because she likes Zitta too.' And then she held Zitta faster in her arms, and closed her jealous little heart again against Miss Moore. She did not want to owe Zitta's forgiveness to her. When presently the maid came in to tell her that her bed-time had come, she said 'Good-night' to Miss Moore, if anything, a trifle more coldly than usual. You see she was a stubborn child—loving enough, but full of fancies, and prejudices, and obstinacies, and all kinds of other evil things, that made it more trouble than it was worth, perhaps, to try and win her.

Possibly Miss Moore may have thought so as the cold little fingers touched hers. Zitta slept always in a basket in Marjory's room, and she came up to

Miss Moore with the little creature tucked under one arm, and demurely said her 'Good-night.' Merely that cold 'Good-night,' and nothing more.

'Well, I do think you might thank Miss Moore for taking Zitta's part!' Kate, who was impulsive, called out suddenly. 'What an ungrateful little thing you are, Marjory!'

And then Marjory's face flushed up, but she turned away, and said not a word more. Miss Moore had not got Zitta pardoned to please *her*; she was not going to say that she was grateful to Miss Moore. So she went away to her bed hugging her favourite, and if her conscience troubled her at all presently for her stubbornness, as perhaps it did—for sometimes, lying quietly in our beds, we get to feel the truth about ourselves more clearly than at most other times—neither Miss Moore nor anybody else was told it.

CHAPTER X.

AS time went on it did certainly *seem* occasionally as if Miss Moore did some kind things,—only appearances are so often deceitful, you know! One day, when Marjory fell down stairs, and hurt herself a good deal, and frightened herself still more, Miss Moore was almost as good to her as Miss Young could have been. Of course she did not caress her and call her pet names, as Miss Young would have done, but she did everything else except that. She picked her up, and soothed her, and bathed her, and bandaged her. The poor little soul had hit her head very sharply, and her right elbow; and both head and elbow were very sore indeed. And then she was frightened, and the fear was even worse than the pain. She clung to Miss Moore, when Miss Moore at the sound of her tumble came hastily from the room to see what had happened.

She had fallen with such a blow that I think her first belief was that she had broken her head in two, and naturally therefore her distress and alarm were great. She certainly had never been so glad to see Miss Moore before as she was when she came running towards her, and took her up from the floor into her arms. For several days after this fall Marjory was very stiff and sore, and all the time she was stiff and sore she could not but feel that Miss Moore was very good to her.

Then Maud had a little illness, and Miss Moore nursed her through it. Maud had a delicate chest, and she caught a bad cold by getting into a draught one hot day, and had to be kept in bed for a week, and doctored with mustard blisters, and all kinds of other things; and during the time she was in bed, and when she got out of bed till she became strong again, nobody in the world could have taken kinder care of her than Miss Moore. Maud said herself, indeed, that she never had enjoyed being ill so much in her life,—and being ill was a thing that Maud always expected to enjoy more or less,—as of course all reasonable children would; for people who are ill are very important people, and if you are not to enjoy yourself when you are petted and made much of, and

never required to do anything (except possibly to take medicine) but what you like, I am sure I don't know when you would enjoy yourself at all.

Somehow both the twins always afterwards remembered that week which followed Maud's illness as a very pleasant one. Maud had to be taken care of still, and treated a good deal as an invalid, and given her own way; and irregular things of various kinds were done. She was not considered well enough to learn lessons, so her mind was fed by reading instead, and by story telling, which she approved of highly. Often before this time—sitting sometimes out of doors, sometimes indoors in the twilight,—Miss Moore had been accustomed to tell the children stories,—true stories often,—stories out of her head at times. She would take real people, and tell their lives to them. Sometimes they were people of whom Kate and Maud had heard before; sometimes they were people who were new to them, or of whom they had only known the names and nothing more. The children liked these tales; even before the time of Maud's illness there were few things that they liked better than to listen to them.

And now, during this week while Maud was recovering, they succeeded in getting a whole harvest

of stories out of Miss Moore. It had turned cool weather suddenly, and in the evenings, in the twilight and firelight, they used to sit and talk for hours together. It was not yet winterly enough to gather round the fire. Maud, indeed, might sit in the easy chair beside it, but the others seldom did. Miss Moore had one seat that she retained usually, at a corner of the school-room table: Marjory coiled herself nearly always into her favourite window corner. The child liked to sit and dream by herself there. The window was one from which they saw the sunsets, and she used to love to watch the sky, and to see the gold and crimson behind the trees. She used to sit often thinking of many things, and longing for many things. The trees were beginning to get their autumn colours now, and some of the leaves were falling, and some were turning rich and red.

One evening when they were sitting so all together, after they had been talking about a good many things, and it was growing late, Kate gave a yawn—she was sitting on a stool at Miss Moore's feet,—and 'I wish you would think of a story to tell us,' she said. 'You haven't told us one all day. Do tell us a story before we go to bed.'

Miss Moore had been a little graver and quieter

during the day than usual, but the children perhaps had not noticed it. Just now before Kate spoke she had been sitting for five minutes quite silent, leaning her head upon her hand, with the firelight shining up into her face. When Kate made her request she did not answer her at once, but after a few moments,

'I was thinking of a story just now,' she said, 'I will tell it to you, if you like.'

'Will you? Oh, thank you!' exclaimed Kate, joyfully; and she immediately settled herself comfortably to listen, with her arms thrown out over Miss Moore's knees.

And then after another little pause Miss Moore began to speak.

'A good many years ago,' she said, 'there were five little children who lived with their father and mother in a dingy old London house. It was rather a large house, in an old square, with a good many sunless rooms in it looking to the north, and a few sunny ones looking to the south, and two unused and unfurnished attics at the top of it, where the children liked to play better than in any other place. I don't know why they should have liked them, for they were a pair of very comfortless rooms, but they did.

They had nothing in them but a little lumber, and a great many cobwebs, and a great deal of dust; but the children never minded either the dust or the cobwebs, and the lumber they loved, because they were at liberty to do almost anything with it that they liked, and indeed they were never tired of making use of it, and, in some way or other, turning it to account in the games they played.

'The rooms, too, had windows high up in the walls, to which they used to clamber, by the help of boxes and trunks, and from which they could see far off over the chimney pots to distant green fields and trees. You children would think it very dull only to see fields and trees so far away, but these ones had never lived out of London, nor hardly ever known what it was even for a little while to ramble about freely in woods and meadows, with the grass beneath their feet, and so they were never unhappy though the chimneys and the brick houses lay between them and the dim country that they saw far off.

'There were five of them altogether,—three girls and two boys.'

'And what were their names?' said Kate, abruptly, striking in at this point.

'The girls' names were Phœbe, and Barbara, and

Janet,' replied Miss Moore: and the boys were Henry and Arthur. Phœbe was the eldest of them all, and Barbara was the youngest. Henry came next to Phœbe; then Janet, then Arthur. Janet and Arthur were next to one another, and of all the five children these two were the closest friends.

'My story is not about the rest of them, it is only about Arthur,' Miss Moore said, after a moment or two's silence. 'He was the best of them all, the one who was worth all the other four put together. You can't think how good he was, how unselfish, how full of everything that was high and pure. He was such a noble-looking lad, too,—so handsome, so strong, so full of life.

'It was not because his sister Janet was at all as good as he was that he was such special friends with her. I think it was merely because she was the one who came nearest to him in age, and who loved him the best. They had always been very fond of one another. When he was quite a little fellow he had been rather a delicate child, and she used to pet him and take him on her knees, and even carry him about, for she was strong at that time compared with him. And then when he was nine or ten years old he had a very serious illness, and she was with him

a great deal all the time it lasted. He liked to have her near him; and she, on her side, I think, was never content unless he was in her sight. They used to pass such happy hours together during that time. At first he was too ill to want, or even to be able to bear, any amusement, though even then he liked to have his sister sit beside him; but afterwards they used to have so many games and talks with one another, and he would make her tell stories to him, and she would invent all kinds of things to make him laugh. She was very lively and full of nonsense in those days,—more so, a great deal, than he was. When they were together she talked ten words for every one that he said. He was always, I think, a little graver than most other children, and she was just the reverse: she was a great madcap and chatterbox. I have often wondered since that he was so fond of her, when he was so quiet, and she so wild and full of fun.

'She was the eldest by just two years. He was better than she was a thousand times, but partly because she was these two years older, and partly because of her liveliness and quickness, he grew up to think a great deal more of her than she deserved, and to trust her and rely upon her as he

hardly did upon anybody else. As the years passed on, too, and they ceased to be children, they did not become less fond of one another. He was so dear to her that she remembers yet, as if it was yesterday, how, when she was seventeen, and they parted for the first time, she felt, as she said good-bye to him, almost as if her heart would break because she should not see his face any more. They parted then because she was being sent away to school in France. At that time all the household was breaking up; the children's father had died, and their mother was going to live out of London, and they had got poor, and it was settled that Janet was to become a governess. She went to Paris and stayed there for four years, only in the course of that time coming home and seeing her brother twice. When she was twenty-one she returned to London for good. Her brother was nineteen then.

'Girls, you don't know what it is to have a brother of whom you are proud with your whole heart!' Miss Moore said this, after a few moments' silence, with something in her voice that made Kate look suddenly up. 'There are few better things — few sweeter things in all the world than that. I almost think it seemed to Janet as if no other thing could be

so sweet, when she came home and found this boy who was so dear to her unchanged.

'He was the only one of them at that time left in London; he was studying there to become a doctor, and, for a few months after her return from Paris, Janet and he lived together. They were very poor during those months, and he was working very hard, and she was trying hard to find work, and they had a great deal to make them anxious; but yet no two people ever spent a happier time than that. There is one of them,' Miss Moore said, after a pause, in a low voice, 'who looks back to it still as to the happiest time of all her life.

'It lasted for just four months, and then she found the situation she was looking for. They were both of them full of hope and life then. He was throwing his heart into his work; and she had always been accustomed, even more than was wise, perhaps, to look at the bright side of things. It was a hard wrench for them to part; but to a boy of nineteen and a girl of one-and-twenty life seems so long,—there is so much in it to look forward to. During the months that they had been together they had made so many plans for the years that were to come.

'She went to be governess to three little girls in a

family where they were very kind to her. The house was in London, and she stayed there for six years. Her brother, too, was in London all that time, till near the end of it, when he obtained an appointment as surgeon on board an East Indiaman, and when he was five-and-twenty and she was twenty-seven he started on his first voyage. They had been a good deal together during these six years, for the family that she lived with liked him—as everybody who ever knew him did, I think—and he had been often at the house. His sister used to think all through those years that there was no one like him—no one so good as him in all the world; and though she was wrong, perhaps, in that (for, thank God, there are many noble people in the world), yet, at least, she was not wrong in believing that God never made a higher nature than his—never one that was purer, more tender, more beautiful. Whatever faults he had were faults that you could forgive; they never made him less lovable—in his sister's eyes they hardly seemed even to make him less good.

'She missed him so sorely when he went away that that summer when he first left England was one of the dreariest of her life. He was gone, and she had had to take another situation, for the pupils she had

taught so long had outgrown their school-days, and the world seemed full of nothing but strange faces. If she had not had his coming back to look forward to——'

Miss Moore abruptly broke off here, and it almost seemed as if something came into her throat, for she sat quite still for a little while and then went on without finishing her sentence.

'He came back after six or eight months,' she said; 'and after that he and his sister only met occasionally, for a few weeks at a time, during four years. He remained a ship-surgeon all those four years, for he was poor and nothing else seemed open to him to do. They both always hoped for something better to turn up, and she was always sanguine (it was her nature to be sanguine in those days), and he was always patient—but the offer of a better thing never came. He liked the sea, too—that, at any rate, was a pleasant part of it—and he was one of those happy people who have the power of throwing their hearts into whatever work they do. He threw his into every stroke of work he ever did in this world.

'When he was nine-and-twenty he left England for the last time. He and his sister bade good-bye to one another one dark February day, and parted, hoping to meet again in a few months. She had

once or twice before been able to go with him to Southampton and see his ship sail, but this time she could not do that. They parted at the house in which she lived—almost hurriedly; for while she was talking with him a sudden call came to her to do something, and she had to go away. There are some little things, you know, that it is rather hard to look back upon afterwards.

'His ship—it was a merchantman—went to Calcutta, and after a few weeks' stay there they set out on their homeward voyage. Until then all had gone well with them; but when they were about half way home cholera broke out on board of a very deadly kind. It was sultry tropic weather, and, one after another, officers and men alike were struck down by it. Hardly any of those who were attacked recovered. A few did live; and these said afterwards that no tenderer or more untiring and self-forgetful help was ever given to men in this world than was given to them. But they were only a few,—not one man in ten perhaps of those who fell ill.

'It was a terrible time, for, one by one, with the single exception of their doctor, every officer on board died; and the doctor was left alone at last, with the sole responsibility of everything on his hands. That

was a position to try what was in a man—to try if he was a brave man or not. For the last ten days they had hardly hands enough left to work the ship home, and the men would have become utterly hopeless and reckless if it had not been for him. But he held everything together; he encouraged and cheered every one: "He would have put heart into a log of wood," one of them said to his sister afterwards. "There wasn't a man on board," they said, "who didn't love and trust him." One of those who had been ill, and had recovered, told her of his courage and his tenderness and his self-devotion, crying, as he talked to her, like a child. "He nursed me as if he was a woman: I'd have given my own life to save his," he said.

'But no one could save him. Four days before their voyage ended he was struck down. He had been a strong man, but from the first he seemed to know that there was no hope for him. Yet even in the midst of his own suffering—to the last moment that he had strength left to speak—they said he never seemed to think about himself, but only of how to keep up the courage of the others round him. They nursed him in turns, one after another sitting by him, and doing what he bade them, and carrying his directions as long as he could continue to give them

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to the others who were still ill. "We all knew he was dying, and it broke our hearts," they told his sister. For himself, he had only one wish—to live till he saw English land again. He had done his work; but he wanted to be laid on English ground, and, if God would let him, to see his sister's face once more. He told them before he died to tell her that.

'He did see English ground again, but it was only from far away. Early on the morning of September 8th (it was this day four years ago) he made them carry him up on deck. All the dangers of the hard voyage were over then, for they had almost reached home. At ten o'clock the man who was on watch called out that he saw land.

'An hour afterwards he made them raise him up, and hold the glass that he might see it too. His eyes must have been growing dim then, but he told them that he saw it, and he sat looking at it for a long while. He must have known by that time that he should never reach it—never should see the poor sister again who was gazing at that same hour towards him across those hopeless miles of sea. She had gone to Southampton to meet him, and she was waiting on the quay during those hours, watching his ship as it came near.

'He died a little while afterwards—quite gently, they said, like a child falling asleep. It was a lonely death; and yet, though no one of his own people was with him, there were rough men standing by his side who loved him, and who were near to him then—as near perhaps as if they had been of his own blood—because he had saved their lives. That was the consolation that he had,—the thought that must have made death easy to him. For he was not to be pitied, Children. He had but lain down his life in doing his work, and those are to be envied often who can do that. He was happier to have died just when he did than if he had lived a life twice as long as his, with no heroic or noble thing in it. He would have chosen such a life and death himself, if he had had the power to do it; and even those who loved him best on earth—to whom the earth has lost its glory since he died—they would have chosen it for him too.'

Miss Moore abruptly left off speaking, and for a little while there was entire silence in the room. The tears had risen into Maud's eyes: even Kate asked no question when the story ended. None of the children said a word till after a minute or two Miss Moore looked at her watch, and then Kate suddenly

exclaimed, 'Oh, I don't think it 's late. It isn't bed-time, is it?'

But it was late. 'It is more than half-past eight,' Miss Moore replied. 'Maud ought to be in bed—and, Marjory, my dear, are you asleep over there already?'

She turned her head to where Marjory sat in the window, and perhaps the others really thought that the child had been asleep, for there came no answer for a moment or two, and then a rather muffled voice said 'No!' half indignantly, at which Kate laughed. The next minute they were all upon their feet, and Miss Moore had stirred the fire and was making a light, while Kate put away books and work.

Had Miss Moore been telling them a story about herself? Perhaps they had all been asking themselves this, and yet even when the story ended none of them were sure. It was Kate—the boldest amongst them, as usual—who put the question that the others only wanted to put before they went to bed.

She had folded up her work and piled her books together without speaking; then all at once she looked towards Miss Moore, who was standing by the mantel-piece while she waited for their departure, and went up to her, and put her arms about her neck.

'It *was* your brother, wasn't it?' said Kate, half below her breath.

Miss Moore merely answered 'Yes.' And then Kate kissed her, with perhaps something more of a hug than usual, and nothing more was said.

'I thought it *must* have been her own brother, didn't you?' Kate asked, when she and Maud were in their own room; and Maud said—Yes, she had almost thought it; and then her lip quivered, and she did not speak again. Kate was the only one who said anything more.

'I can't think how she can speak about it as quietly as she does! I think if it had been me, I should—I should have done something quite desperate,' said Kate.

But what she would have done, or what purpose she thought it would have served to have become desperate, Kate did not explain; and Maud, on her side, did not ask.

The children went to bed very silently. Miss Moore's story had touched all three of them, more or less, and one of them at any rate lay awake presently and cried over it. No one who did not know Marjory well could have thought that the stubborn little thing would have been so moved by a story of

two people, one of whom she did not care for, and the other of whom was dead ; but the child was both sensitive and imaginative, and Miss Moore's tale had impressed and touched her more than any of the others guessed.

It seemed to her—for she, happily, knew very little yet of the troubles of the world—that it must have broken anybody's heart to have had to bear what Miss Moore had borne. She lay thinking of it, and picturing to herself the sister going on board the ship and finding her brother dead, till she could not sleep. 'How could she bear it?' she kept thinking to herself over and over again.

Miss Moore said to her in the morning : 'Have you got a headache, Marjory?' for the child's eyes when she came in to breakfast were dull, and not half their proper size. But Marjory only said 'No,' in an aggrieved way, and, conscious of her last night's tears, looked down upon the table-cloth, embarrassed and shame-faced.

Yet all through the day she could not forget the story that she had heard last night, and again and again she kept looking at Miss Moore, and watching her with curious speculative eyes. In all her little life before Marjory had never knowingly been face to

face with any one who had suffered a great grief, and now the sudden discovery of Miss Moore's sorrow impressed and awed her in quite a curious way. She could not forget it—she was so sorry about it—she kept wondering constantly whether Miss Moore was thinking of it. 'What are you looking at, Marjory?' Miss Moore said to her once, after she had noticed the child's watchful eyes a dozen times fixed on her face; but Marjory only flushed when that question was put to her, and turned her head away.

The other two seemed almost to have forgotten the tale already, but Marjory could not forget it; it kept haunting her all day; all day she went wondering how anyone who had suffered what Miss Moore had done would look so cheerful and bright. Once, as she was saying her lessons, some string or button about her frock came undone, and Miss Moore, without making her turn round, put both her arms about her and refastened it, and curiously, the child liked the feeling of what seemed for the moment almost like a caress. She never before had wanted to be near Miss Moore, or to touch her, but to-day she wanted to be near her because she was so sorry for her. She was so sorry for her that—if she had not been too shy to think it possible to show her sympathy—she almost,

once or twice would have liked to put her arms about her neck.

Suppose *she* had known somebody that she loved very much, she sat and thought to herself, and he had gone away like Miss Moore's brother, and died! She would have tried to die too, she thought: she wondered if Miss Moore had tried to die. Miss Moore, just as she was thinking this, broke into a sudden laugh at something that she saw Kate do, and the clear bright sound of her laughter struck Marjory with a curious sense of wonder. If what had happened to Miss Moore had happened to Marjory, it almost seemed to the child with her simple heart as if she never should have been able to laugh any more.

CHAPTER XI.

TO tell the truth, however, Miss Moore laughed very often. She was too full of life not to be a laugher, however great a sorrow she might have had to bear once. 'I should like to have seen you when you were quite young. Were you very wild indeed?' Kate asked her one day. She had been telling them some stories that day that prompted Kate's question, and I am afraid when it was put to her she was not able to rebuke Kate as perhaps she ought to have done, by returning her a severe 'No' for answer: but on the contrary, she gave one of those laughs that seemed so odd to Marjory, and coolly said, 'Yes, I was terribly wild. I was harder to manage than all the rest of us put together. I was always the ring-leader in every piece of mischief; and if I had lived in the country instead of in town there is no saying what might have happened to me, for I believe I

should have broken my neck, or my back, or have drowned myself, before I was fifteen. One can't, however, get into quite so much trouble in a town as one does in the country—though I am afraid I did the best I could under the circumstances.'

'But I can't think how you could ever have been really hard to manage. I feel as if I couldn't imagine it,' Kate said.

'Well, perhaps you had better not *try* to imagine it, my dear. You see how easy I am to manage now,' replied Miss Moore.

And then Kate burst out laughing, for to hear Miss Moore talking of anybody managing her *now*, either easily or not, seemed a very comical idea to Kate.

In fact, Kate was pretty shrewd, and she knew by this time well enough that Miss Moore was a good deal cleverer than any other person in the house, and that she could make most of them do just what she chose. She was very clever; and yet outwardly, you know, she was a very quiet woman, and that face of hers, if there was energy in it too, had also in it some grave, sad lines. I think it was in some ways a very sweet face, though it was not pretty. Perhaps it might have been too keen and hard once, but it was not hard now. It was often grave, and sometimes you might

have called it cold, but sudden looks would come occasionally to it that almost at moments made it beautiful.

'I look at her sometimes,' Kate said once, 'till I think she is ten times prettier than Miss Young.'

'Oh, Kate!' cried Marjory, flushing up with indignation when her sister made this speech; and at the moment Marjory firmly believed that her sister had said a shameful and ridiculous thing; and yet—!

Well, there were times presently when there was something in Miss Moore's face that began to have a curious influence over little Marjory—times when something in the look of her eyes used to make the child's heart beat quick. As she sat by Miss Moore's side saying her lessons to her she used often to lift up her own eyes to them and drop them again, with an odd sort of feeling, as if they were reading her through and through, and she was half glad and half sorry that they were doing it.

Often, too, when she was singing Marjory used to sit and look at her, till by degrees she almost came in the bottom of her heart (though of course she would not confess it) to think the same that Kate thought. Surely when she sat singing her face *was* almost beautiful! She sang to the children very often; as the

autumn came on and the nights lengthened she used often to sing to them by the firelight for a long time, and Marjory would sit in her window corner, gazing and listening, with a curious mixture of feelings,—with, at the bottom of all, a curious yearning. It was sometimes almost as if the child knew that she had closed a door against herself, and shut herself out from a thing that might have been hers once; and now she sat looking back upon it, with a sad, half-conscious longing.

I think there were some days during these autumn months when a word from Miss Moore would have been enough to bring those little arms of Marjory's about her neck; but perhaps Miss Moore was tired of trying to win her, for she never spoke it. She was very kind to the child, but she never treated her now as if she expected to gain any love from her. She had done so at first, but all that was over now; and the poor little heart, as the weeks went on, used to flutter and beat in vain. It was very foolish of it to flutter and beat, but yet as time passed it got into the way of doing it, and of always hoping and expecting and waiting for something that never came. Did she know, do you imagine, what it was she was always hoping for? I think, when Miss Moore's hand some-

times used to touch her, or when Miss Moore's eyes used to look into her face, that she knew very well, whether she ever put it into words or not.

But the weeks went on, and autumn came and passed, and it grew to be winter with its short dark days, and still Marjory and Miss Moore were hardly any nearer to one another than they had been before the summer ended. At Christmas Miss Moore was to go away for a little while.

'And what are we to do without you, I wonder!' Kate was always saying as the time drew near. 'I wish you wouldn't go. I don't think there can be anybody anywhere else who wants you as much as we do here.'

'Possibly nobody wants *me*, but suppose *I* want some one? What then?' Miss Moore said to her, laughing, one day; and then Kate was rather puzzled, and could not quite find an answer.

'Oh, if you want somebody, I suppose you must go. But who do you want?' she said at last.

And then Miss Moore began to tell them about the place to which she was going. It was to the house of her youngest sister, who was married, in London.

'And the person I want is Dick,' Miss Moore said.

'Dick and I are a pair of most devoted friends; and we have never been parted at Christmas time since he came into the world, which is seven years ago, so that he would think the times were out of joint, and so should I, if I didn't appear along with the Christmas pudding. Dick is my godson, and I am very fond of him. He was born on Christmas day, and I was born on Christmas day, too, so he thinks we are both the same age, and that it is like one of the laws of the Medes and Persians that we are to spend our birthdays together.'

'Well then, I suppose it 's no use to try and keep you,' replied Kate resignedly, and said no more.

But, in spite of what Miss Moore had told her, it so happened on this particular Christmas day that little Dick, with what feelings he might, had to celebrate his festival by himself; for Miss Moore did *not* pass her Christmas in her sister's house, nor eat her Christmas pudding in Dick's company.

This was how it came about. It had been arranged that she was to go to London three days before Christmas. She was to go then, and she was to remain away for a month. But a week before Christmas day a serious thing happened.

It had been cold bright frosty weather all through

December. Very delightful weather, the children thought it, for they were never tired of scampering out of doors, and making foot-prints on the snow, and sliding on every bit of frozen water, and running races along the crisp hard roads; but some people who were older than the children thought it very bitter, and suffered from it even as they sat by their warm fire-sides.

'These sharp winters make me feel a very old woman,' Mrs. Blandford said to Miss Moore one day. 'I used to like frosty weather once, but I can't move about as I used to do, and my blood gets chilled, and the rheumatism comes into my back, and I lie awake at night and cough. I am seventy-five, so I don't complain, but I shall be glad when a thaw comes.' It was a long frost, however, and day after day passed and no thaw came.

They used to have merry gatherings in the school-room round the fire during these cold nights, and merry gatherings round their little tea-table too, when the lamp was lighted and the day's work was done. The children were in the happy and natural condition in which children should always be—of thinking every season when it came the most delightful in the world. When it was summer, it seemed to them that nothing

could ever be so good as the summer pleasures of the green fields and trees; but when it was winter they were just as happy with the frost and snow, and the bright fires and long nights in the warm, lighted rooms. 'I never know what I like best,' Kate would sometimes exclaim. 'Everything seems so nice in its own way.'

That was a right feeling to have, and they all shared it, down even to Zitta, who shivered in the cold weather, it is true, but yet conducted herself throughout it with amazing spirit. I am afraid I cannot say that Zitta, since that sad business of the shawl-tearing, had improved in any marked way in her general conduct. To tell the truth, she had not been in the least impressed by that misadventure; and what between trying to educate her,—which was a very forlorn task,—and trying to suppress her whenever Mrs. Blandford came within sight or hearing of her, Marjory had had a pretty busy time of it. But Zitta had come safely through the months so far, and was enjoying life now in this cold weather as every dog with a light heart and a clear conscience ought to do.

Only, alas! these light hearts, though they are such pleasant things, bring one sometimes into trouble! There was a certain cold bright evening, when they

were all seated at the tea-table, that Zitta, in the gaiety of her nature, and thinking no evil, went leaping up at Marjory's side, trying to catch a handkerchief which Marjory held above her head. Marjory and Zitta had been having a very wild game together before tea came, and they had both got into high spirits over it, and could not quite calm themselves down even when the time for sitting still came.

'Don't excite Zitta any more now, my dear,' Miss Moore said to her; but yet Marjory went on exciting Zitta, remaining quiet in obedience to Miss Moore for a few moments, and then giving another sudden flirt of her pocket handkerchief, which was just temptation enough to mischief to keep Zitta from sobering down. Marjory's place at tea was at Miss Moore's right hand, and between Miss Moore and her there always stood a kettle boiling over a spirit-lamp. The child had got happy over her game, and was bubbling over with laughter; the other children were watching Zitta too. She was such a pretty, light, lithe little thing; she always leapt so gracefully. Marjory gave a little scream of laughter once, for Zitta almost caught her handkerchief, and she had to pull it so quickly from her that she jerked the table as she did it, making the cups and saucers shake.

'Marjory, take care! You have nearly upset your cup,' Miss Moore said again. 'You must do as I tell you. Don't go on playing with Zitta now.'

'Oh, it's all right,' answered Marjory, carelessly: but yet she knew that she must leave off her game, and so, before giving it up, she made one last tiny flourish with her handkerchief.

Alas, poor little Marjory! She hardly meant any more harm than Zitta did, but harm comes so often when we do not mean it. Zitta, at that final flourish, made a wild leap up into the air, and caught her prize, and Marjory, forgetting orders and forgetting caution, jumped up from her seat, and burst out laughing. The next moment,—what was it that had happened? There was some other sound than laughter in the room: there was a crash, and then a great cry, and everyone had started to her feet.

'Oh, Marjory!' some one said.

Marjory remembered that scream afterwards, and how it had sent the blood rushing to her heart, and made the room swim round with her. But for the moment the poor child hardly knew what she had done. She saw a cloud of steam before her; she even felt a few drops of scalding water touch her foot, but for a few moments she did not know the rest: she

did not know the misery that was coming till she saw Miss Moore's face.

Miss Moore had started for a moment from her seat, but had sunk down into it again, quivering with pain. Maud had rushed from the room, screaming for help. How the next few minutes passed Marjory never afterwards could remember clearly; it was all too dreadful to remember: she only had a confused recollection of people rushing into the room, and frightened voices breaking out in exclamations of distress, and a feeling in her heart of dumb agony and despair. For she thought that she had killed Miss Moore. That was her first terrible fear. She thought that she had scalded her to death, as she saw her white face with its closed eyes.

It was a relief to her for the moment, like the passing away of some frightful nightmare, when, after a little while they made her rise, and got her from the room. They had partly undressed her as she remained seated in her chair; that was the first thing that Mrs. Blandford had tried to do. And then she rose, and they helped her to reach her own room.

As she rose she could not stand upright for pain.

'I can walk if you let me lean upon you,' she said to one of the servants.

She spoke with a catch in her voice, as if she was suffering so that the words would hardly come, and then the servant put her arm round her, and she slowly crossed the room. That was the last that Marjory saw of her. In another minute the door of her own room had closed behind her, and the child had crept away to the window seat, and huddled herself together there into a little heap, feeling as if her heart must break.

She did not know what to do ; she had only one thought for herself,—that she wished she were dead. How could anyone want to go on living who had done such a dreadful thing? Her sisters had followed the little procession from the room, and were lingering about the passage, with sad faces, talking below their breath.

'I wonder how soon Dr. Walker will come!' Maud whispered.

'And what he will say! Oh, I wish I knew what he would say. Did you see her face?' Kate suddenly asked. And then the muscles about Maud's lips began to quiver, and they stood both of them without speaking. They were kind and affectionate girls, and they felt as if a blow had come upon them that had taken the light out of their hearts; but yet they did

not feel as Marjory did,— that to undo this last half-hour they would give their lives. Only the poor little passionate guilty thing felt that, as she sat in her agony of remorse and sorrow, and saw no hope nor comfort before her, and feared to pray for comfort even to God, because she had been too naughty, she thought, for God to listen to her.

Lonely and desolate the child sat, crushed up in her corner. She thought once of going away and hiding herself and her misery in her own room, but she was afraid to go; she was afraid of the darkness and the silence. Hopeless of any sympathy or pity though she was, feeling amidst the others like a little outcast, yet she could not bear to go and be alone.

Kate and Maud came presently back into the room and sat down in silence. Neither of them attempted to do anything; neither of them spoke to Marjory. Perhaps they were sorry for her, but what could they do or say? Children are so often shy of a companion who is in trouble. They sit apart and look askance at her a dozen times for one time that they try to comfort her. How could either of the others comfort Marjory just now? And if they had no comfort to offer, what was the good of speaking to her? perhaps they thought.

The door of the room was open, and they sat listening for the doctor's steps. Occasionally one of them went out into the passage, and stood listening there, but there was nothing to hear for a long time.

Hardly any sound came from Miss Moore's room. Once or twice the door was opened, and a servant ran quickly downstairs for something that was needed, and returned again; but the children could not venture to stop her to ask questions.

'There he is now!' Kate exclaimed at last, and both Maud and she leapt to their feet. They had heard the sound of carriage-wheels, and in another minute the doctor's step was on the stair. Before he had reached Miss Moore's room the door of it was opened by Mrs. Blandford, and she spoke to him in a low voice for a few moments in the passage: then they both went in together, and the door was closed again, and the children saw and heard no more.

They heard no more for a long time—for a whole half-hour of anxious waiting.

'Oh dear, I wish they would let us go in and see what they are doing!' Kate said once with a sigh.

'*Couldn't* you go?' Marjory suddenly asked in a stifled voice.

She was startled by her own question when she had

put it. They were the first words that she had spoken at all, and she looked piteously to Kate as she said them, and half got up from her seat, and then all at once convulsively broke into a loud passion of tears. Hitherto she had not cried at all—she had not been able to cry; but now, all in an instant, her tears and sobs came, and she could not stop them again. She began to cry so passionately that the other two looked at each other with a bewildered look, not knowing what to do.

'Oh Marjory, what in the world is the good of crying at *this* moment?' Kate said almost impatiently, after a little while; for the child's distress, breaking out at this particular time, seemed foolish and unreasonable to her sensible sister: but Marjory sobbed bitterly on and made no answer. She could not stop her crying, and, perhaps, it was best for her not to stop it. At eight years old it is natural to cry when one is sorry—more natural a great deal than to feel—as Marjory had been feeling for the last hour—as if there was a tight band across her chest that would let no tears come.

Maud was standing watching at the door when at last Dr. Walker and Mrs. Blandford came out of Miss Moore's room; but they did not speak as they

crossed the passage and went downstairs, and when, after a few minutes, Mrs. Blandford returned, she too went back at once into the room, without even looking towards where the children were waiting.

'Oh, it's too bad!' Kate cried, with the colour in her face. 'Somebody might come and tell us.'

But evidently nobody thought of them: they had too much besides to think of.

'I'll go downstairs and see if Harriet knows anything,' Kate presently said: and she went down to the kitchen, and stayed away for a little while, and then came back with a grave distressed face. 'They don't know much, but—but they say she 's scalded dreadfully' she said, with almost a break-down in her voice.

'O—h!' cried Marjory, quivering, and burst into fresh tears.

And then nobody spoke any more for a long time.

After nearly half an hour more had passed, the servant who had been staying in Miss Moore's room came out, and Kate sprang across the passage and laid hands on her.

'Martha, come here! O Martha, come and tell us something,' Kate cried; and she pulled Martha, who was a staid old servant, by the arm, so that she had

to follow her into the school-room. 'What is being done to her? How is she? Can't you tell us?' Kate impatiently exclaimed.

'Well, she's lying pretty easy now, poor thing,' Martha quietly said. 'It's an awful scald—all down her arm, poor dear, and over her side; but she's lying as comfortable now as we can make her.'

'And—and what does Dr. Walker say?'

It was Maud who asked this question, abruptly, yet almost below her breath. Martha pursed her mouth before she answered it, and shook her head.

'Doctors don't say much, my dear: it ain't their way,' she replied after a moment's silence. 'Dr. Walker just says—what most of us know already.' And then Martha paused, having conveyed a sense of added awe to the children by the vagueness of her reply.

None of them ventured to put any other enquiry to her, and after another silence—'Where's Marjory?' Martha suddenly said: and, looking round, she saw the child huddled together in that sad little heap upon the window seat, and shook her head again with a good deal more emphasis than before. 'Oh, Marjory!' said Martha, 'you naughty, naughty child!'

A few hot tears welled up to poor Marjory's smarting eyes at this address, but they merely rose and trickled meekly down her cheeks, and she said nothing. Of course everybody would scold her, and hate her, and they would send Zitta away from her too: she knew all that, but she was too miserable to mind it much. If only Miss Moore were well again, the poor little thing felt as though she would hardly mind it even if her grandmother were to send *her* away too as well as Zitta. A pair of little sorrowful culprits, they might go wandering away together. I am not sure but what, in view of the sad possibility of Miss Moore *not* getting better, Marjory had even begun to contemplate the chance of this punishment being provided for her with a certain sense of relief and satisfaction; for if Miss Moore were not to get better, what could she want for herself except to go away somewhere and die? She might go away, she thought, with Zitta in her arms, and sit down under a tree; and then, perhaps, she would fall asleep, like the Babes in the Wood, and the snow would come and cover her and Zitta all over, and they would never awake any more. That would be almost the most satisfactory thing that could happen to them

both, poor Marjory thought,—in the terrible event of Miss Moore not getting well again.

Martha had gone away downstairs, and it was past Marjory's bed-time; but the house had been all turned upside down by what had happened, and nobody came for a long time to put her to bed. The children were still sitting sad and silent, when Mrs. Blandford softly opened Miss Moore's door and closed it behind her, and came at last into the room.

'Children, you should not be up so late,' she said at once, in her usual cold, grave voice.

'But we couldn't bear to go to bed! We want so to know—' Kate began quickly.

'I daresay you know all that there is to tell, my dear.' Mrs. Blandford's pale face looked grey with fatigue as she stood by the table, with the light shining up into it. 'Miss Moore has been in great pain; but she is sleeping now. Dr. Walker will see her again in the morning. Go all of you to bed: you can do nothing for her, you know.'

She stood still for a moment, and gave one look to Marjory. Perhaps she had meant to speak to her, and then felt her heart fail her when she saw the poor little humbled head; for the child had no courage to look her grandmamma in the face, but cowered into

her corner when she came into the room, and never raised her eyes. Mrs. Blandford glanced at her for a moment, and then turned away and said nothing. Perhaps she might have spoken some word to comfort her if she had been another kind of woman: but Marjory was suffering for her own wrong-doing (however much out of proportion to the offence the punishment might be), and suffering of that sort, in Mrs. Blandford's eyes, was always salutary. So she did not add to her burden by any hard word; but neither did she lighten it by any kind one. She merely bade the children good-night, and left them: and then, sadly and silently, they went to bed, and, with her face turned on the pillow, Marjory sobbed herself to sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT should she do if Miss Moore did not get well? That was the last thought she had before she went to sleep—the first thought that came to her in the morning. If Miss Moore were so much hurt that she never would be quite well any more, how could she bear it? Marjory thought. For to the passionate little thing it had suddenly come to seem as though what happened to Miss Moore were of more consequence to her than what happened to anyone else in all the world—as though, if she had brought harm upon her that could not be cured, she should want nothing but to creep away where nobody could find her, and lie down and die. The hot little heart was bursting within her as she lay sobbing in her bed and thinking this. She had been bad to Miss Moore so often; she had refused so obstinately to allow herself

to love her; and now the thought of having injured her, and the thought of having refused to allow that she loved her, made her feel as if her heart would break.

She did not know what to do when the morning came, and she had got up. Harriet, who came to dress her, gave her an account of Miss Moore's sufferings the night before that made the poor child sick. 'Oh, it was awful to see her,' said Harriet; 'she was in such pain. When they cut her dress away, I could see her quivering all over like an aspen leaf; and as for colour, she was as white as your pinafore. But she's a rare one for bearing and not saying a word. She just gave a little cry once, like a sob, and drew her breath hard, and that was the only time she opened her lips, except to speak a word or two now and then so cheerful you wouldn't have thought the scratch of a pin ailed her. But, oh dear me, Marjory, you were a careless child! I'm sure you don't deserve to have anything told you. There—turn round and let me fasten your frock—and do now, for goodness' sake, keep out of mischief to-day.' And then Harriet, having finished her ministrations, with her last words gave the child a push forwards, and, helpless

and dejected, the poor little thing passed out of the nursery.

She went to the schoolroom, where her sisters were already before her, but they did not speak to her nor she to them as she entered the room. They were shy of one another, and did not know what to say.

'You are to have your breakfast downstairs with your grandmamma,' Harriet put her head in at the door and said after a few moments had passed: and then presently they went downstairs and had their meal with Mrs. Blandford.

'Miss Moore had some sleep in the night, and she is as well as we have any right to expect that she could be this morning,' Mrs. Blandford told them, as they took their places.

'And may we see her presently?' Kate eagerly asked.

But at this question their grandmamma shook her head.

'I think not, my dear. She must be kept quiet,' she said.

'But we wouldn't make a noise,' cried Kate indignantly. 'Oh, I should so like to see her, if it was only for a minute!'

'Well, you may possibly be allowed to see her

merely for a minute in the course of the day, you and Maud,' said Mrs. Blandford. 'But, as for Marjory—' And then all at once she looked towards the child, and made a sudden pause.

The poor thing did not know what her grandmother had been going to say, but the unexpected gaze and the arrested sentence were too much for her, and she dropped the bread and butter in her hand and burst into piteous tears. It was in vain that Mrs. Blandford said, 'I was not going to scold you, Marjory: I daresay you are very sorry for what you have done:' the cold words could not comfort her, or make her tears cease.

What a sad and weary day it was! Soon after breakfast the doctor came, and stayed a good while with his patient Then for hour after hour nothing happened. The children sat by themselves, and passed their time as they could. Once they went out for a walk, but the day was very cold, and they were too dull to walk briskly enough to warm themselves, and so they came in chilled and tired.

In the afternoon, Kate, who had been out of the schoolroom for a little while, returned suddenly with a bright face.

'I've seen her!' she exclaimed triumphantly to the

other two; and then, when Maud broke into an eager question—'Yes, I saw her just now,' she said. 'As I was coming from our room her door was standing open, and I thought I would just go and peep in, and so I did, and there was nobody there, and I gave a little cough, and all at once she put back her curtain and called "Kate!" and I ran in. Oh, she's such a darling! I ran up to the bed, and got my arms round her neck and kissed her, and she began to laugh, just as if there was nothing the matter with her. But she can't move her right arm a bit! It is all bound up—all the arm from the shoulder down—and perhaps it will never come right again. Just think if it shouldn't! Think of her having a stiff arm presently, like old Mr. Crozier, and never being able to play any more!' And Kate's bright face clouded over with a look of distress.

'But Mr. Crozier didn't burn his arm; he broke it,' said Maud presently, not unnaturally seeing some loophole for comfort in that fact.

'Yes, but burning is ever so much worse than breaking,' retorted Kate. 'If his is stiff only from being broken, I am sure hers is much more likely to heal stiff when it's burnt all the way down. Oh, it's horrid to think of! And to see her so cheerful, too!

I'm sure,' said Kate, with the colour beginning to come into her face, 'when she was talking to me, I hardly knew whether to laugh or to cry.'

'It would have been very foolish to have cried if she was cheerful,' said Maud.

But Kate's lip quivered a little, and she said nothing more until after a minute—

'I told her to ask grandmamma to let us in, and she promised that she would,' she said. 'It is so tiresome of grandmamma not to let us in! Just as if we were babies, who couldn't be quiet!' exclaimed Kate indignantly.

'Grandmamma always thinks that we are babies,' said Maud, in her placid way.

And then nothing more was said. Poor little Marjory had not opened her lips while the other two had talked, but she had listened with her heart beating fast, and with all her ears. Had Miss Moore, she wondered to herself, said anything about *her*? When Miss Moore should ask her grandmamma's leave for the others to go in and see her, would she ask leave for *her* to go in and see her too? The child sat pondering these questions till she grew weary. How she longed to go into Miss Moore's room, and yet how she feared to go! How she wanted to see Miss Moore

again; and yet, if she saw her, how could she dare to look at her? Or what could she say to Miss Moore, or Miss Moore say to her?

It was hard for Marjory all through this day that she was left to regard herself as so much more of a culprit than she really was. She had not been so very much to blame; and yet, because no one said a kind word to her, she thought she had been so terribly to blame, and she hardly knew how to bear the weight of the misfortune that had fallen on her. Neither her sisters nor her grandmother knew what she was suffering. She had cried a good deal, and they had thought it very natural that she should cry (because, of course, whether she had been much to blame or not, what she had done had been a very dreadful thing), and they had been very sorry for her, and kind to her in a grave sort of way: but when she left off crying they had not thought of being specially kind to her any more. They left her very much to herself all day, and she sat with a book upon her knees, but without reading almost a word of it, and growing, with nearly every hour that passed, more sad and lonely. After Kate had come back, and made that little report about her visit to Miss Moore, the child sat thinking of what she had said, and of the

chance that Miss Moore's arm might never recover its power again, till, if any one could have seen into her heart, they would, I think, have been sorry for her.

It was an hour or so after this that Mrs. Blandford, coming into the room, said suddenly—

'Girls, if you would like to see Miss Moore, you may come and speak to her for a few minutes now.'

'Oh, thank you!' cried Kate joyfully at this announcement, and sprang up from her seat.

And then Maud got up as well. They two were ready to go—but what of Marjory? The poor child had flushed red at Mrs. Blandford's speech—so red that she had not dared, for shame and shyness, to look up. When the others rose she did not rise—she did not dare; and after a moment or two her grandmother spoke to her.

'Marjory, do you wish to go with your sisters?' Mrs. Blandford said.

She was standing near the door, so near that, till she moved, the twins could not easily pass her, and they too, therefore, were standing still and looking on while that question was put to Marjory. The child had to raise her eyes and find three other pairs of eyes all turned upon her—three pairs of eyes who all

knew the thing that she had done, and what a miserable culprit she was. Poor little Marjory! She ought not to have been afraid of the judgment of any of those three people on her, and yet she was afraid of it; she was so overwhelmed by her own sense of her iniquities that she thought all the world must condemn her and be against her—that nobody could have any love or kindness for her left. When her grandmamma said, 'Do you want to go with your sisters, Marjory?' and she lifted up that poor flushed face of hers, she did not know what to say or do—she hardly knew even what she felt or desired.

She began, after a moment or two, to say something in quite an inaudible voice, and her grandmother interrupted her almost sharply.

'My dear, you must speak louder if you want me to hear you. What is it you say?' Mrs. Blandford enquired; and then there came no response at all: the little voice had got utterly quenched.

Mrs. Blandford waited for a few moments, and then moved so as to let the others pass.

'Go by yourselves, my dears,' she said. 'If Marjory does not know whether she wants to go or not, she had better stay here.'

'She can see Miss Moore to-morrow,' said Kate,

cheerfully. And then the twins took their departure, and Mrs. Blandford too went away, and the child was left by herself.

They did not know what she felt when she was so left, or they would have been kinder to her, I think. But, you see, they none of them supposed that she cared about Miss Moore: if they supposed anything at all, it was the reverse of that; they could not tell in what an agony of pain and remorse she had passed these last hours. Her sisters went away, and in a few minutes were as happy as queens, sitting perched, the one at Miss Moore's pillow and the other at her feet, telling her all about their anxiety over her, and asking her questions concerning the pain she had endured, in voices as lively as young birds.

'Oh, it was so horrid without you all last night,' Kate said. 'And they wouldn't tell us almost a thing about you. Grandmamma was as stiff as a poker, and would hardly say a word, and everybody went about with faces a yard long. It's bad enough as it is, I daresay—but I am sure last night it almost seemed as if you were dead.'

'And then poor Marjory looked such a little object!' exclaimed Maud. 'She was in such a dreadful fright.'

'Why didn't Marjory come with you now?' Miss Moore asked.

'Oh, she wouldn't,' said Kate carelessly. 'She is always being obstinate about something. She is reading a story, and she didn't want to leave it, I suppose. I daresay she will come to-morrow. She is all right now, you know. And does your side hurt you as much as your arm?' asked Kate. And then she began her questions again, and there was no more said about Marjory.

Miss Moore had suffered a great deal, and her face was looking very white. She let the children talk, and she talked to them in return cheerfully and even laughingly; but after a little while Mrs. Blandford came into the room and made their conversation cease.

'If you would like to bring your book and stay for a time you may do it, Kate,' Mrs. Blandford said; 'but I can't allow you to talk any more now. You may sit here and be ready to give Miss Moore anything she wants, and then Maud may come presently and change places with you; but you must both be quiet if you come, or I shall send you back to the schoolroom. Miss Moore is very far from being well enough yet to be troubled with your noisy tongues.'

So then Maud took her departure, and Kate got her book, and established herself happily in a seat by the bedside.

'She is going to stop with Miss Moore,' said Maud to Marjory; 'and presently I am going, when she comes back. Miss Moore asked why you hadn't come with us, and I'm sure I couldn't tell her. I think you *ought* to have come, Marjory, when it was all your fault,' said Maud severely, and sat down to her work, feeling that she had done her duty in making that little speech—as, indeed, she possibly had, for was it not true that Marjory, who had done all the mischief, should, before all other people, have gone and spoken to Miss Moore? But Marjory, Kate said, had got engrossed with her story-book, and had not cared to go and see her. Kate, as far as her belief went, had only said the truth. She had not meant to blame her sister much; she had only meant to state what was a fact, she thought—that Marjory had cared less to go and see Miss Moore than to stay in the schoolroom and read her book.

Kate, however, you know, was wrong, and the yearning little heart, when her sisters went away, had followed them with a passionate longing and regret. Did either of *them* want to go to Miss Moore

as *she* wanted to go to her? They had been good during these months that were past; they had loved her and been obedient to her; they had never injured her; how could they feel towards her as Marjory felt, who had been troublesome to her always—who had rejected her kindness a hundred times—who had hurt her so that she might never recover from her hurt? The child sat, after Maud had made her speech, with meekly bitter tears trickling silently down her cheeks. She made no answer to what Maud said—she was too much crushed by her trouble to say a word in her own defence: she did not even feel as if she had any right to be angry because Maud had blamed and misunderstood her. She sat with her face half turned away, and Maud never saw that her cheeks were wet.

No one during the remainder of that day asked Marjory any more if she would like to go and see Miss Moore. Both Kate and Maud were a good deal in her room, but no second invitation to go there came to Marjory, and the child was too shy to seek for one. If she could but slip in when no one saw her, she sat by herself and thought. That was what she longed to do—to steal into the room when no one else was there, and—when there was nobody to hear her—

to tell Miss Moore how sorry she was. If she could but do that! But all the evening passed, and there came no opportunity of doing it.

It is such a weary thing to wait and wait, and always to miss what we are waiting for—to lay a plan for doing so and so, and then to find that all our plan comes to nothing, because some little thing will not happen as we had thought it would. Sometimes, when we plan most we gain least, you know; and sometimes, when we plan little, then the thing we long for, or another thing as good, comes to us. My poor little Marjory could not sleep that night for thinking how, when morning came, she would watch and try to find a time when nobody should be in Miss Moore's room, and how she would slip in then and speak to her; and when morning did come all her little scheme fell so hopelessly to pieces, poor child!

Her nursery was on the floor above the room in which Miss Moore slept, and from the door of it she could see Miss Moore's door, and early in the day she went upstairs, and began to hang about, watching the people who went out and in. She watched for a long while, and at last she thought that a time had come when there was no one in the room. Her grandmother was not—she was sure of that; and Kate and

Maud were not; and Harriet was down in the kitchen, for she heard her voice. So, with her heart beating fast, the child slipped down the stairs and reached Miss Moore's door, and, trembling all over, opened it and put in her head.

But the moment she had timidly put in her head, a voice (that was not Miss Moore's voice) called sharply out, 'Who's there?' and the next instant Marjory saw Martha standing by the bedside.

'Oh, it's you: you can't come in just now, dear. Away with you,' said Martha brusquely.

'Is it Marjory? Let her come in for a moment, Martha,' interposed Miss Moore. And then Marjory saw an outstretched hand, and heard Miss Moore's voice saying again, 'Come and let me see you, Marjory;' and, abashed and confused, the child found herself sidling awkwardly up to the bedside, every word that she had meant to say gone out of her head, and her poor little mind only able to grasp the facts that her plan had failed, and that Martha, with washing-basin and water in hand, was standing over her, impatiently resenting the interruption of her work.

Miss Moore's left hand was held out, and, as Marjory came up, she put it on the child's head.

'Thank you for coming to see me,' she said. 'I

shall be dressed soon and ready for visitors, and then you must come back again. What are you all doing to-day? You might go to your practising; it wouldn't disturb me, you know. Tell Kate and Maud that. Run away and practise now; that will be a good thing to do; and presently I shall be ready, if you like, to have all three of you together.'

And then, with a laugh and a little pat upon the shoulder, Miss Moore let Marjory know that she might take her departure, and the child turned round and went away, without having opened her lips to say one word.

She went to the schoolroom, where Kate and Maud both were.

'What are you going to do? You are not going to practise?' said Kate to her quickly, as she went up to the piano and opened it.

'Yes, I am. Miss Moore says we are all to practise,' replied Marjory dejectedly, getting upon the music-stool.

'When did you see Miss Moore?' cried Kate.

And then Marjory had to make her confession.

'I saw her just now.'

'What, did you go into her room without being told?' asked Kate in amazement.

'Martha was there,' replied Marjory deprecatingly, as if that in some way explained the matter; and we are so easily taken in by words that Kate ejaculated 'Oh!' as if she really thought it did; and, though she meditated for a moment or two, asked nothing more.

So then Marjory began to play her scales, and went on playing her scales and her little tunes with a heavy heart for the next hour.

And afterwards they all went into Miss Moore's room together, but little good came to Marjory from doing that—nor very much, indeed, to any of them, for Miss Moore was suffering too much pain to be able to talk almost at all. She lay on her side, with her face looking so worn and white that it frightened Marjory.

'I don't think you are half as well to-day as you were yesterday,' Kate said gravely, shaking her head at her. And then Miss Moore had to allow that at that moment she was not.

'But I shall be better presently, after Dr. Walker has come and looked after me,' she said.

Kate had taken possession of the most eligible seat by the bedside, and Maud had perched herself on the bed itself, and there was no specially good place left for Marjory. Of course she might have jumped up on the bed too, if she had had courage to take that

course, but she had not courage to take it by any means; so when Miss Moore said, 'Where are we going to find a seat for you, Marjory?' the foolish little shy thing began to back ungraciously, and finally deposited herself upon a chair from which she could neither see Miss Moore's face, nor could Miss Moore see her.

'Why, you are going a long way off,' Miss Moore said to her, laughing; but Marjory made no reply, and the next moment Kate began to talk, and then Miss Moore said nothing more. Perhaps she supposed, as she had good reason to do, that Marjory had gone to this distant place because she did not care to come any nearer to her.

It was rather a sad half-hour that they spent in the room altogether. The girls talked, and Miss Moore tried to talk, but she was in so much pain that at last she had to tell them they had better go and leave her to herself. All the time that they were together she hardly spoke a word to Marjory, and the child had no more chance of making the little contrite speech to her that she had rehearsed to herself over and over again than if, instead of being in the same room, they had been a mile apart. And then at last Miss Moore said they had better leave her, and they went away.

'I think she is *ever* so much worse to-day than she was yesterday,' Kate repeated, with a solemn face, as soon as they were in the schoolroom again. 'Why, yesterday, when she talked to us, you could hardly have told that anything was the matter with her; but now !— I think it's dreadful to see her this morning. She looks as white as if she was dying,' said Kate, with a sob in her voice.

'Yes, but she *isn't* dying,' replied Maud calmly. 'People often get white like that when they are in pain, but they don't die because they get white. I daresay she will be better again presently.' And then Maud went placidly to her French exercise; but Kate looked grave still, and Marjory's heart grew heavier than ever.

She went to her seat in the window-corner, and sat down sadly there. After a little while, Zitta came into the room and leaped upon her knees, and poked her pointed nose into her hand; but, though Marjory caressed her pet, and put her pinafore over her, and let her go to sleep in the way she loved, Zitta could not comfort her.

There was only one person just then in the world who would have had the power of comforting her, and Marjory thought that she had lost all chance of

receiving comfort from that person, at any rate for this day. But, as I said before, we sometimes gain what we are longing for at moments when we expect to gain it least. On the afternoon of this same day, as the child was wandering aimlessly and disconsolately about the house, all at once she heard a voice call 'Marjory!' and, looking over the banisters, there was Martha, half-way upstairs, with a glass filled with something in her hand.

'I say, Marjory, take this in to Miss Moore for me, will you?' said Martha. 'That was your grandmamma's bell, and I must go to her. Here, carry it carefully, and tell Miss Moore it's the lemonade.'

And then Martha handed over the glass to her, and, with her heart beating fast with sudden joy and fear, the child found herself in another moment making her way to Miss Moore's room. She went forward without stopping, and gave a little tap at the closed door.

'Come in,' said Miss Moore's voice, and then Marjory turned the handle and went in.

There was nobody in the room except Miss Moore, and the child went gravely up to the bedside.

'Martha told me to bring this in. It's lemonade,' said Marjory.

'Thank you, my dear. Look, you may put it down

upon this little table. That will do nicely,' replied Miss Moore.

And then there was a little pause; Marjory had put down the glass, and if she was to speak at all the moment for speaking had come.

But how hard it often is to speak! She stood as still as a little image for a few moments, and in those moments a lump came up into her throat. She was not looking at Miss Moore, she was looking on the ground, and looking on the ground is not a proceeding that puts much courage into one. I think the sight of Miss Moore's face would have loosened her tongue much faster than the sight of the pattern on the carpet did; and, indeed, in the end it came to that; for after the silence and the looking down had lasted for a little while, Miss Moore put some question to her ('Have you had a walk to-day, dear?' was what she said), and then all at once the grey eyes went up, and the tears rushed into them, and the lips began to quiver, and, without replying to what Miss Moore had asked, she suddenly burst into her little piteous speech and confession.

'Oh, I'm so sorry!—because it was all my fault,—and I've been naughty so often; and if you don't get better—if you're going to die—I don't know what I

shall do!' sobbed Marjory, quivering all over and panting, so that what she said was almost unintelligible.

'My child!' exclaimed Miss Moore quickly, and she put out her hand—she had only one hand that she could use—and drew Marjory towards her, and tried to soothe her.

'My dear,' she said, 'it was an accident; don't you think we all know that? You mustn't make yourself unhappy with fancying that you were to blame. And as for dying, nobody supposes in the least that I am going to die. Did you think they did, poor child? No, no, I am only going to be very useless for a time, and then I hope I may be just as well again as ever. Come, my dear, you mustn't cry; if you cry like this you will quite distress me,' said Miss Moore.

But for a little while Marjory could not stop crying.

'But they say, even if your arm heals, that it—it will heal stiff,' she sobbed.

'Who says that?' asked Miss Moore rather quickly.

'K—Kate,' said Marjory.

'I don't think Kate knows much about it,' replied Miss Moore. 'For my own part, I am very hopeful that it *won't* be stiff. You see, I don't at all take the

despondent view of the case that you and Kate seem to be doing.' And then Miss Moore actually gave one of her bright, clear laughs. 'I think I shall get quite well again, and not be a bit more stiff than I was a week ago.'

'O—h!' said Marjory, with something between a sob and a sigh of relief.

'And you must try and think the same, and not put on such a sad little face any more. Why, all you children ought to try and cheer me, and not tell me that I am either going to die or be maimed,' laughed Miss Moore.

'But I—I was so frightened, and so m—m—m—miserable,' sobbed Marjory.

'Well, don't be frightened or miserable any more. You see, if anybody should be frightened, it ought to be me; and I'm not frightened a bit or miserable either. I'm only smarting a good deal. And here is Dr. Walker, I think; so run away now, Marjory, and let me see you bright and happy to-morrow.'

And then, drawing the little face towards her, Miss Moore kissed it; and as Marjory slipped away from the bedside, Dr. Walker came in at the open door.

So the child had got a part at least of what she wanted; and she was half-comforted, at any rate. Ought she to have been wholly comforted, do you think, and to have wanted nothing more?

'Martha sent me in to Miss Moore with some lemonade, and she says her arm *won't* be stiff,' she reported to Kate, a little while after she had returned to the schoolroom.

'*Who* says it won't be stiff? Martha?' enquired Kate contemptuously.

'No, Miss Moore. She says she thinks it will get quite right again. I asked her,' said Marjory.

'Hm!—Perhaps she doesn't know,' said Kate dubiously; for Kate, if she had begun to take a dismal view of anything, did not specially like to be pulled up short about it, and told that she was all in the wrong, like this.

'Well, I should think she knew more about it than you do,' responded Marjory, not unnaturally. And then the conversation ceased.

She would get well again, and come back amongst them! Marjory sat thinking of that till it seemed to her as if she ought not to need any other thing to make her glad. And yet we are so unreasonable that

we nearly always *do* want some other things besides those we get. And so Marjory longed for something else. She longed (this was what she thought to herself)—she longed to be by Miss Moore's side again, with her two arms about Miss Moore's neck

CHAPTER XIII.

CHRISTMAS had passed, and the new year had come—such a bright, pleasant, sweet new year. The frost and snow were gone, and the sun seemed quite to have forgotten that it was January, and to think that it was May instead, he was shining so lustily. He used to shine into Miss Moore's room for hours every day, till she had to shift her sofa sometimes from place to place to get out of his way.

She had begun to lie on the sofa now. She used to get up for several hours every day, and put on her dressing-gown, and move a little about the room, but the scalds upon her arm and side were only partly healed yet, and she could not use her arm at all, nor take even a few steps without pain. 'She is going on very well,' Dr. Walker always said; but Marjory's little face used to pucker sometimes when she sat watching her. She had one scald on her hand that

made the child, when she first saw it, burst into tears.

'Oh! will it leave a mark?' she cried, appealing to Miss Moore with such piteous eyes that, to try and make the matter seem less serious, Miss Moore had to laugh as she answered her.

'Well, perhaps it may leave a mark, but we must try to endure it if it does,' she said.

And then, at that reply, the foolish little thing had begun to cry—'because Miss Moore had such pretty hands,' she said.

The children used to spend a good deal of their time now in Miss Moore's room. They liked to be there, and she was good-natured enough to be willing to have them. 'You must not let them tire you. You would be far better without them. Children are so fatiguing,' Mrs. Blandford always said: but Miss Moore was fond of children, and these three, you see, liked her, and were good to her. At least Kate and Maud were *very* good to her. There was nothing that Kate would not have done to give her pleasure. She used to sit on the bed at her feet, or on the ground beside her sofa, for hours together, ready to run to all points of the compass for her. In fact, Maud used to say that Kate took possession of Miss Moore, and would

not, if she could help it, let anybody else have anything to do with her; and Maud, I think, was not so very far wrong. Little Marjory might hang about the room the livelong day, and never have a chance of getting Miss Moore to herself for so much as a solitary five minutes from morning till night.

But then, of course, Kate never knew that Marjory wanted to get Miss Moore to herself: it was the last thing that would ever have entered Kate's mind. She was quite easy in her conscience in taking possession of Miss Moore, because she was convinced that nobody else cared for her half as much as she did, or liked half so well to sit beside her. Maud did not, she was very sure; and as for Marjory—why, a little bit of a thing like Marjory was nobody, she would have said, if she had ever thought at all about the matter, which she never did. So the child used to wait, and long, and linger, but she did it all in vain, for Kate stuck to her chosen places, and occupied them without a moment's thought that anybody else wanted to occupy them in her stead.

All through her after life Marjory never forgot those weeks in Miss Moore's room. The days passed so quietly, and they were days that were half so sweet to the child, and half so sad. She might have been

so happy sometimes while they lasted—sometimes she almost *was* so happy; and then at times the little heart, when no one knew it, would get full almost to bursting. If she saw a whiter look than usual on Miss Moore's face—if Miss Moore made some movement and found it hurt her, or stopped abruptly—as she did occasionally when she was speaking, as though a sudden pain caught her breath—the tears would start to the child's eyes. She used to feel at such times as if nothing in all the world could comfort her except to do some great thing for Miss Moore—to suffer instead of her—to give her life for her. She had a trick of longing to throw away her life for the people whom she loved. She would have given it away many a time of old (or she thought she would) to bring some good thing to Miss Young: she would so gladly give it away now to make Miss Moore well. Marjory was only eight and a half 'years old, you know; and at eight and a half we think so many foolish, loving, passionate things. (Some of us, as we grow older, leave off thinking them; but some of us, too, *never* leave off.)

There was one special happy evening that she remembered always afterwards. Miss Moore that evening was lying on the sofa, and the children—because the

night had turned rather chill—had gathered round the fire. They had had their tea in the schoolroom, and then had come into Miss Moore's room afterwards, and Kate had put out the candles—'because one always talks so much more comfortably by firelight,' she said—and stirred the fire into a blaze. It was a cheerful room that looked very bright and pretty on these winter nights.

Kate had taken her place as usual on a foot-stool by Miss Moore's side, and was making herself happy in that position. The sofa had been wheeled to one side of the fire, and on the opposite side Maud sat; and a little apart from the rest of them, but nearer to Maud than to Miss Moore, sat Marjory, with Zitta on her knees—for Zitta, in spite of her iniquities, lived and reigned over Marjory still, and not only came into Miss Moore's room, but was even as barefaced a little dog there as if, in truth, she had not been at the root of all the mischief. 'But, then,' as Marjory said deprecatingly, in excuse of her, 'you *can't* make her understand'—which was certainly very true indeed, for nobody, as far as moral training was concerned, had ever made Zitta understand anything.

They had been sitting so for a good while, and

they had all been talking. Miss Moore, too, had been telling them stories. She had been telling them about the school in which she had lived in France, and about some of the girls who had been with her there, and about things that had happened to them. It had been a school in an old town in Normandy—a town with quaint old houses and churches in it, and picturesque streets, and a pretty river that went winding through the flat, low land. She had been telling them about the time when she first went there, and how lonely she had been at the beginning—she, a solitary English girl, amongst so many foreign faces. 'For I knew little French,' she said, 'and I could not talk to the girls, nor they to me, and I had never been away from my brothers and sisters before, and I was very home-sick. Those first weeks were a dreary time, though I got happy afterwards. I was sometimes afterwards very happy indeed.'

The fire went dim as they sat talking; and presently, when the room was almost dark, Miss Moore, after a little silence, raised her head, and said, 'Where are you, Marjory?—for she did not see the child; and then a little voice came out of the gloom.

'Here!' answered Marjory from her corner.

'My dear, why do you sit so far off? Are you not

cold?' Miss Moore asked. 'I think it is very cold to-night. Come a little nearer to the fire.'

And then, as Marjory rose up and came, Miss Moore held out her hand to her.

'You shouldn't sit over there and get so chill,' she said. 'Look—here is a corner for you, if you will bring a stool. Move down a little bit, Kate, and let her in. Yes, that is right; there is plenty of room. Now, will that do?'—and Miss Moore laid her hand on Marjory's hair as the child, in happy, shy surprise, took the place she had been called to—the place that was almost Kate's, close to the head of Miss Moore's sofa. Kate had moved a little lower, so as to make room for her; and when Marjory sat down, Miss Moore first stroked her hair for a few moments, and then put her arm beneath the curls about her neck, making the little heart thrill at the soft sudden touch. Then presently she went on talking again, letting her arm stay so.

'And what about the teachers at that school? Did you have nice teachers?' Kate asked; and Miss Moore began to tell them about the different governesses that there had been in her time.

'Some of them were very nice indeed,' she said. 'There was one whom we were very fond of, who

was the prettiest Frenchwoman that, I think, I ever saw. No one was ever so popular in the school as she was; but she only stayed with us for a year, for at the end of that time she went away to be married. And then there came some one in her place who was very unlike her—Valérie Michel.'

Miss Moore said the name slowly, and remained silent after she had spoken it for a few moments: then—

'Some of us became fond of her too after a time,' she said, 'but we did not begin by being fond of her; we began, I am afraid, by being all very unkind to her. She was gentle, and quiet, and timid, and we used to plague her. It was a large school—there were about fifty of us—and she was far too shy and gentle to be able to manage us, and of course we soon found that out. We gave her a great deal to bear for the first few weeks; and I daresay we should have gone on giving her a great deal to bear if it had not been that one day, when we were tormenting her and buzzing about her like flies, and she couldn't reduce us to order, or make anything of us, poor thing, all at once in the midst of it she burst into tears. I shall never forget that day,' Miss Moore said very quietly. 'She was trying to get through a

class, and she could not do it because of the disturbance in the room. She had tried in vain to make us quiet, over and over again; and then at last she turned round and began to make a little speech to us, and all at once, in the middle of it, she broke down.'

'And what did you do?' Kate asked quickly, for Miss Moore paused here.

'Well, for a few minutes we were all quiet enough, and then, when presently she went on with her teaching again, there were one or two of us who kept the others still. I had a friend, Marie Turgot, and she and I and another of the elder girls joined together, and from that time we made ourselves a sort of bodyguard to poor Mademoiselle Michel. We three could do a great deal more with the other girls than she could, and we kept them in order for her. We did it simply out of pity for her at first; but after a time, I, at any rate,' said Miss Moore, 'did it far less from pity than from love.'

'Then she was really nice, was she?' asked Kate.

'Yes,' replied Miss Moore, 'she was very nice. She was very warm-hearted, and very grateful. After we had taken her part for a day or two, one afternoon when I was alone with her she put her arms

about my neck, and after that by degrees she got into the habit of talking to me, and telling me a great deal about herself. She had led such a sad sort of life. Her father and mother had died when she was a child, and she had no home, nor any one belonging to her. She had been sent to school till she was sixteen, and then from that time she had earned her own living. When she came to us she was twenty-five.

'Poor thing, she was not pretty, nor clever, nor strong, nor fitted in any manner to make her way in the world. She always tried so patiently to do her work, but, even with all the help we could give her, her work was too hard for her. After a few months, Madame Rôche—that was the name of the lady who had the school—told her that she must leave.

'She was to finish her second quarter with us, and then to go and try to find another situation when the summer holidays came. She cried the day she told us that she was going: she said that we elder girls had been so good to her. We had not been good to her except towards the last, but she was so grateful that I think she forgot that. I remember so well how she kept saying over and over again that she should

find no others who would be so kind to her when she went away.

'But, as it turned out, she *never* went away. She had never been strong, and a week or two after it had been arranged that she was to go she caught a cold which settled on her chest, and before the holidays came she died. She died at Madame Rôche's, for she had no friends to go to. For a little while at first after she was confined to bed none of us saw her, but presently Marie Turgot and I asked leave to go to her, and after that we used to see her every day. We used to go separately and sit with her. I was not a child then—I was seventeen—and I suppose I was old enough to be some comfort to her. At any rate she loved me, and I loved her. We spent many quiet happy hours together. She had so little belonging to her in the world that it was hardly any pain to her at all to think of leaving it. We who were about her were almost the nearest friends she had.

'I was not with her when she died, but I saw her and said good-bye to her the last night of her life. She had hardly strength to speak then. I think she knew better than I did that we were parting from one another for the last time.'

Miss Moore stopped speaking here, and they were

all quiet for a little while. It was Kate who broke the silence first.

'I think she must have been very fond of you,' Kate said, 'How good you were to stand up for her, and make the other girls treat her well!'

'There was no great goodness in doing that, Kate,' replied Miss Moore. 'You should rather think how unkind we had been at the beginning when we treated her ill. There was none of us who gave her more trouble than I did at the first. If I had not made up to her a little for it afterwards I think I should have half broken my heart when she died.'

They left off speaking about Mademoiselle Michel after this, and when a few more minutes had passed, Miss Moore said:

'Now, children, I am going to send you away, for I am getting tired. Stir the fire, Kate, and make a little light, and then run away and see if your own fire is in.'

So Kate rose up and brought some light into the room, and then came to the head of the sofa and kissed Miss Moore; and Maud kissed her, and they both wished her good-night.

'Come along, Marjory,' Kate said, turning to leave the room. But she and Maud had both reached the door before the child moved.

She had been sitting all this time with Miss Moore's arm about her neck, and with her warm little heart growing very full. There had been little enough in this last story that Miss Moore had told, yet it had touched the child and pierced her to the quick, as small chance things sometimes do. Had *she* not been unkind to Miss Moore, just as Miss Moore had been unkind to Mademoiselle Michel? And Mademoiselle Michel had died. 'Suppose'—she had sat thinking—'suppose that, instead of getting better, Miss Moore had died too!'

Miss Moore's arm had left her shoulder as the others came to say good-night to her. As they turned away the child rose from her seat. Those last words that had been spoken—'If I had not been able to make up to her a little for my unkindness, I think I should have half broken my heart when she died'—had gone straight into Marjory's own heart, and were still making it swell and throb.

She rose up, and stooped over the sofa to give her good-night kiss as the others had done; and then—all at once, almost before she knew what she was doing—she had burst out sobbing, and her arms had gone tight about Miss Moore's neck.

'My child!' Miss Moore said to her, soothingly.

She put her hand on Marjory's hair and stroked it. Perhaps for a moment or two she hardly understood what this sudden emotion meant, until, through the broken sobs, some foolish, childish words of remorse and love began to struggle up. She understood it then. 'My child!' was all she said to Marjory at first; but a minute afterwards she said something else. 'My darling!' she softly said.

That last word somehow seems to have brought my story to an end: there seems all at once to be no more to tell. It is as if we had gone a little journey together, and here had come suddenly the parting place where we shake hands. So let us say good-bye and go our different ways.

And if you want a moral for my story, I think, Children, the moral is, that in this world we sometimes get a great deal more than our deserts. Do you not think that Marjory had got more than hers? She was such a foolish little thing; so obstinate, so perverse, so blind. How had she deserved that Miss Moore should love her better than she loved either Kate or Maud? for that was in reality what Miss Moore did. She had loved her the best all along: she loved her

the best long years after this, when Marjory was a woman, and the schoolroom was empty, and the tasks and the story-telling alike were both at an end.

But we cannot argue about these things. There are some who win love easily all their lives. Let us each in silence take the good that is given us,—and thank God.

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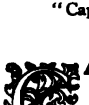

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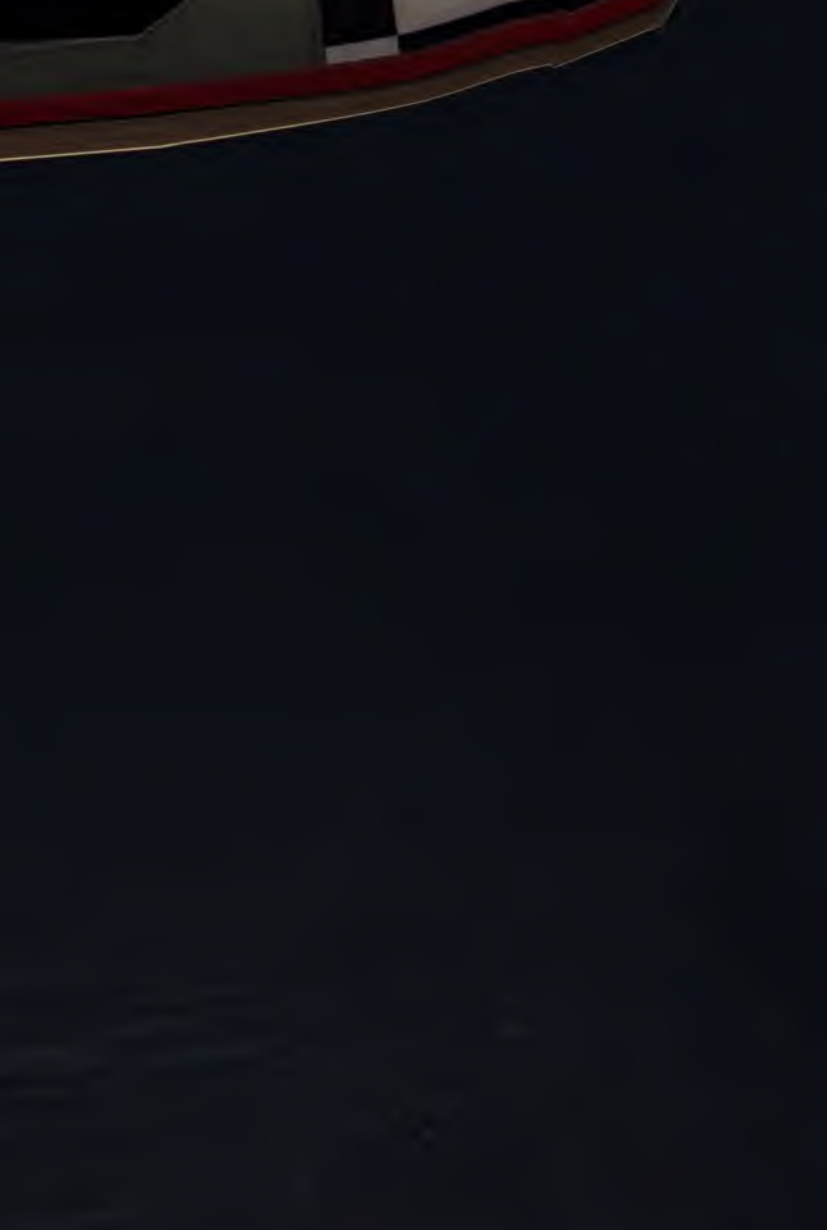

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